NOT-SO-BRILLIANT PEBBLES—*THE EDITORS*

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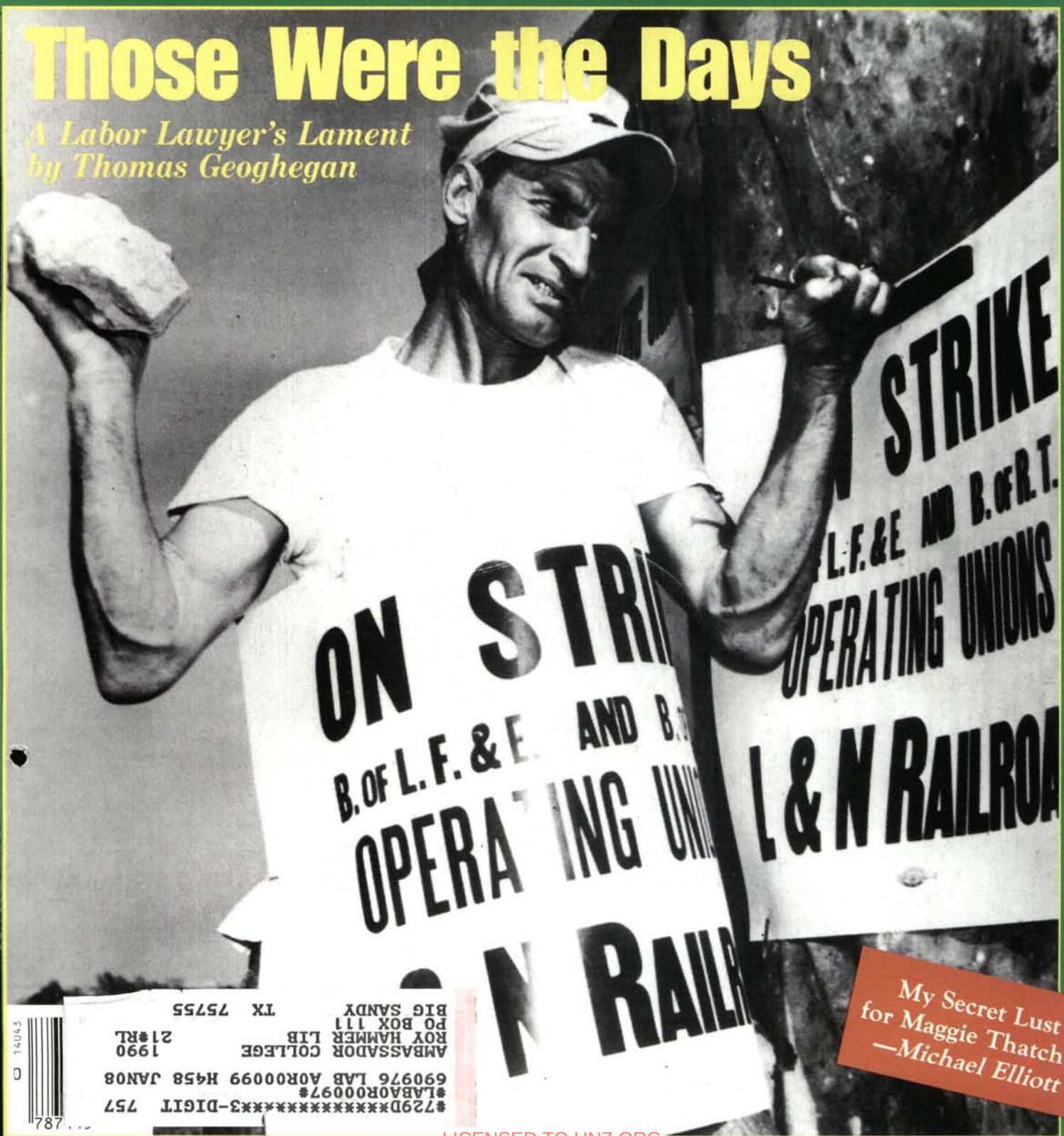

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MAY 29, 1989

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TRB®
FROM WASHINGTON

Obit for a friend

This is the week people in my line of work are supposed to be thinking about Oliver North. Can't do it, not this time. My thoughts are too full of someone else—also a decorated veteran of the Vietnam War but a quite different sort of hero, and a friend I have suddenly lost.

Herb Denton—his full byline was Herbert H. Denton Jr. of the *Washington Post*—was my steadiest and staunchest and most constant friend. Without doubt he was my dearest friend, and it is perplexing to imagine what the world is going to be like without him.

I met Herb Denton one day in September 1961 at the Harvard Union, where freshmen take their meals. We sat down with our lunch trays and didn't get up again till about 9 that night, except to fill our trays again for dinner. It was the beginning of a conversation that went on for 28 years.

We were exact contemporaries, born two weeks apart in the summer of 1943. Each of us was fascinated by the other's background. I was the son of white New York socialist intellectuals; he was the son of a black elementary school principal in Little Rock, Arkansas, a city that, at the time, had more moral glamour than any other place in the country. When Governor Orval Faubus closed the schools in the desegregation crisis of 1958 and President Eisenhower sent in the troops to enforce the Constitution, Herb had taken his lessons at home. There's a picture of him in the *Britannica Book of the Year* for 1959, sitting on the living room floor in the house where his mother still lives, taking notes from a teacher on a bulbous old TV. By the time the Little Rock schools reopened, Herb was enrolled at a Massachusetts boarding school to which someone had recruited him during a science fair at Howard University. He finished there as valedictorian. At Harvard he wrote for the *Crimson*, the daily student paper, and sold ads for it too, and graduated with honors.

The best service I ever rendered American journalism was to convince Herb Denton to get out of banking. Actually it didn't take that much convincing. In 1965, the year we graduated, Herb was working for the Morgan Guaranty Trust Company in New York and going out of his mind from boredom. So I called him up and asked him how he'd like to come down to Washington and help me edit a magazine for the National Student Association. The pay was about a fifth of what he was getting at Morgan and the job would only last till the summer. He said, "Well, I'll have to think about it. OK, I've thought about it. I'll be there next week."

He arrived as promised, and by the time summer rolled around he had landed his job at the *Post*, where he spent the rest of his life, except for his two years in the Army. In Vietnam, where he served with the famous First Cavalry Division (Airmobile), he didn't shoot anybody—he was an "information specialist," and though he carried an M-16 slung over his shoulder his hands were generally busy with notebook and camera. That didn't keep him from getting shot at, of course—on jungle patrols, at Khe Sanh, and in the heavy fighting on the outskirts of Hue during the Tet Offensive. He served well and uncomplainingly even as his doubts about the war were strengthened by experience. And his letters to me—I was in the Navy at the time, pulling shore duty back home—strengthened my own resolve to become a resister, an idea he thought singularly foolish.

Back at the *Post*, he rose to city editor, one of the first blacks to hold a position of such authority. According to Don Graham, who had become his close friend when they served together in Vietnam and who is now the *Post*'s publisher, he was the finest city editor the paper ever had. In that job he brought along a generation of black journalists who have matured into the paper's pride, including Courtland Milloy, now the *Post*'s best columnist; Milton Coleman, now an assistant managing editor; Athelia Knight, now a metro reporter; and Juan Williams, now the star writer for the *Post*'s Sunday magazine and the author of *Eyes on the Prize*. In 1980, after six years as an editor, Herb went back to reporting. He covered urban affairs and did a stint on the White House beat. In 1983 he was sent to Lebanon, just in time for the bombing of the U.S. Marine barracks. Then as now Beirut was a dangerous place, as dangerous for reporters as Vietnam was for soldiers. Herb loved it. He returned after two years, and then only reluctantly, after a bout of ill health. Soon he was off again—to Toronto, as the *Post*'s first Canada bureau chief. It would be his last assignment.

Of his father, the school principal, Herb once wrote: "He was a man who so insisted on rigorous standards that he once flunked one of his younger sisters in a biology class, a tale that became part of Little Rock lore." As an editor the son was similarly exacting: a stern taskmaster, sparse with praise and intolerant of excuses.

Or so I am told. I never saw that side of him, but then I never had to work for him. To me he was the gentlest—if not always the least sarcastic—of friends. When he moved to Toronto our lifelong conversation continued by telephone, an instrument Herb played like a virtuoso. Blessedly, he never had an agenda. He'd never say, after the pleasantries, "Let me tell you what I'm calling about." Because he wasn't calling about anything. He was calling to talk, and talking with him was simply pleasure.

I don't believe I ever knew anyone as free of racial prejudice as Herb. I don't mean anything so crude as hatred or bigotry—a lot of people are free of that. I simply mean stereotyped thinking, the assumption or expectation that a given person will be a certain way on account of color. Herb had a lot to say about race and racism but he had no wish to be imprisoned by it. That was one reason he liked Toronto, a city with over 100,000 blacks but no black neighborhood. Race matters up there, as it does everywhere. But not very much.

Herb Denton died of pneumonia in Toronto at 8:45 p.m. on Saturday, April 29, 1989. "He had AIDS," his obituary in the *Post* added laconically. He must have known he had that cruel and unjust disease, but no one else did. He chose privacy, and he chose courage. He had shown courage in Vietnam and Lebanon, and in the fierce integrity he brought to his work; and he showed it in the way he dealt with his illness, which he faced with the unflinching stoicism of the legendary Spartan youth who hid a stolen fox beneath his cloak.

Herb inhabited many worlds, and in each of them he was at once insider and outsider. I used to worry that he was too alone, but he was not so much alone as he was self-reliant. He was utterly and absolutely his own man. It's reductive to single out any one quality in a person one has loved, but I will remember Herb Denton most of all for his tenacious, sometimes contrary, independence of mind and spirit—tempered, thank God, by a loving heart. It made him a skillful journalist and a cherished, irreplaceable friend.

HENDRIK HERTZBERG

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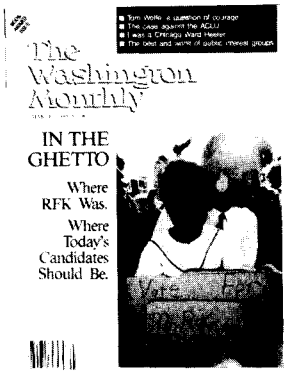

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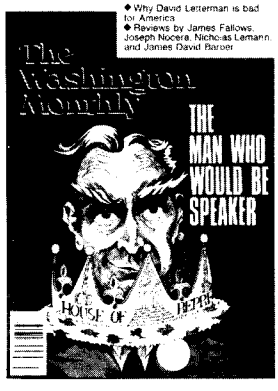

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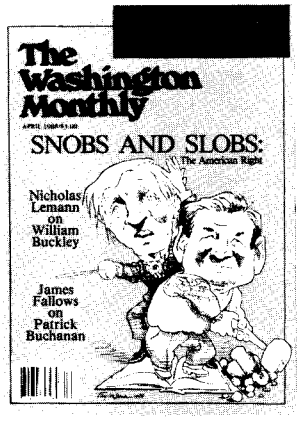

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CORRESPONDENCE

Bail Necessities

To the editors:

With regard to Robert Nagel's "No-Bail Solution" (April 24), it is dismaying to observe the current race between conservatives (who supposedly respect traditional values) and liberals (who theoretically have great regard for civil rights) to run the Constitution through a paper shredder in the name of the "war on drugs." Most people would not dispute the withholding of bail to persons accused of seriously violent crimes and who circumstances indicate present a very real threat to their fellow citizens pending trial. Nagel, however, proposes denial of bail for a far broader range of crimes for purposes of *punishment* prior to actual conviction by a court of law. The Fifth and Sixth Amendments clearly state that citizens are not to be deprived of liberty without "due process of law," and that in the case of "criminal prosecutions" this means "a speedy and public trial, by an impartial jury." Nagel gives a two-sentence brush-off to the plight of accused innocents and no mention to the Founders' concerns with the potential for abuse of arbitrary government power to punish without trial.

Do we regard our constitutional guarantees no longer as well-drawn lines setting forth limits of government in a free society, but instead as mere technicalities for clever drug warriors to end run? If so, we may wake up one day to find that we no longer are, or deserve to be, a free society.

RICHARD L. RUBIN
Oakland, California

A New Awareness

To the editors:

As a black man who studied at Harvard in the 1970s, I must admit that Robert Detlefsen's piece on the "racism awareness" effort at Harvard rings true ("White Like Me," April 10). One of the sad legacies of the black experience in this country seems to be a susceptibility to just the kind of hypersensitivity and hyperbole Detlefsen describes. As an undergraduate and graduate student, I attended countless meetings where both were on ample display. Unfortunately, the psychological comfort of being simultaneously privileged and oppressed seems too enticing for many people to forgo.

CHRISTOPHER H. FOREMAN JR.
Washington, D.C.

To the editors:

I very much enjoyed "White Like Me." It leaves me wondering what motives lead AWARE Week participant John Dovidio to overlook such expressions as "whitewash," "white-livered," and "whited sepulcher." Obviously, not all expressions containing "white" connote good; nor are expressions containing "black" necessarily bad. Our daughter's delight in "four-and-twenty black birds" pales beside her father's joy in the discovery of "black gold." Out here in the oil patch, black is the favorite color.

TRINKA TAYLOR
Midland, Texas

Time Is Money

To the editors:

James Bennet notes the basic concerns of the critics of the Time Warner merger: "the fears that stem from the general concentration of power in the communications business" ("Time Out," April 24). But he quickly disregards them, saying, "They have a fuzzy and paranoid sound." Do they? How committed are media managers, especially those higher up in the corporate food chain, to the free marketplace of ideas? "Information," really a term designating a process whereby someone enjoys

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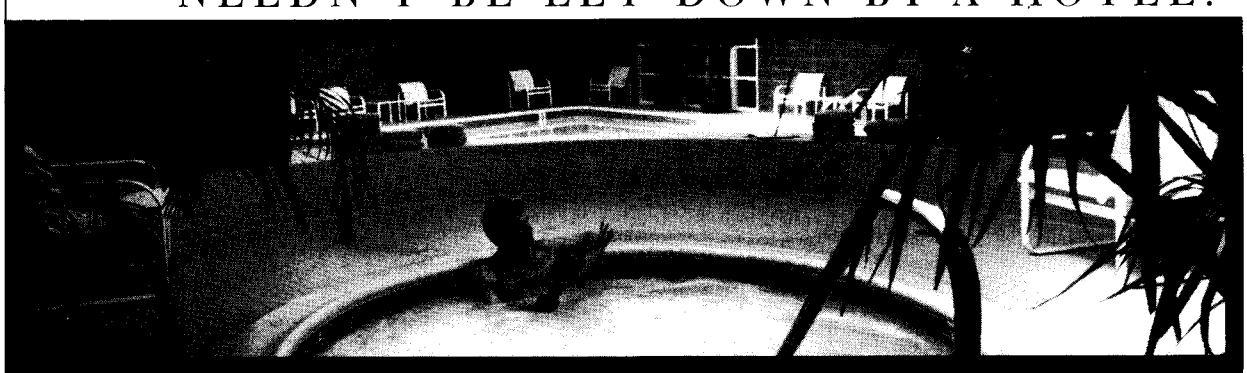

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THE NEW REPUBLIC
MAY 29, 1989

TOO BRILLIANT BY HALF

Ever since the Strategic Defense Initiative was converted from fantasy into policy by one of Ronald Reagan's speechwriters, it has survived largely on the strength of its deficiencies. Because so many of its proposed technologies are farfetched, debate has tended to focus on the technical feasibility of SDI rather than on the wisdom of it. Critics spend their time dissecting unworkable or alarmingly expensive missile defense plans, inadvertently obscuring a more basic point: even if Star Wars "works," it is probably a bad idea; in many of its incarnations, it is more likely to start a nuclear war than prevent one.

The latest Star Wars idea—"Brilliant Pebbles"—is a case in point. It has a science fiction quality that is sure to start lots of technical debates. It would surround the Earth with thousands of three-foot-long, hundred-pound orbiting projectiles, each capable of spotting and destroying Soviet missiles during their ascent. And Brilliant Pebbles enthusiasts have assigned it a suspiciously low price tag, thus ensuring arguments about cost. Lost in the debate will be the fact that Brilliant Pebbles is trouble even if it works.

Before elaborating on that point, let us first join the chorus of voices noting that Brilliant Pebbles isn't exactly a proven technology. The idea is sponsored by Edward Teller, the visionary, viscerally anti-Communist physicist, and Lowell Wood, Teller's visionary, viscerally anti-Communist protégé. Their last major contribution to SDI's imagined arsenal, you may recall, was the X-ray laser, which hasn't quite panned out. In 1984 Teller wrote arms negotiator Paul Nitze a letter saying that "a single X-ray laser module the size of an executive desk which applied this technology could potentially shoot down the entire Soviet land-based missile force, if it were to be launched into the module's field-of-view." Golly, that would be neat. But a month later a somewhat embarrassed Roy Woodruff, then head of the X-ray laser program, wrote Nitze, delicately conveying that Teller's vision was "not impossible, but very unlikely." He warned Nitze that letting Teller's enthusiasms serve as the guiding light for SDI's budget would warp its funding priorities.

Nonetheless, that's what Secretary of Defense Dick Cheney has decided to do. He says the focus of SDI research will be shifted toward Brilliant Pebbles over the next few years. Let's give Cheney the benefit of the doubt and suppose that this confidence isn't misplaced, and Brilliant Pebbles will work. That means that by the end of the 1990s, we'll be able to put into orbit between 10,000 and 100,000 brainy, bullet-shaped killer satellites—between two times and 20 times as many satellites as have been launched in the history of mankind. What will we have then accomplished?

To begin with, we won't have rendered the nation invulnerable to Soviet attack. Even supporters of Brilliant Pebbles don't claim that it would provide the sort of astrodome defense that President Reagan originally envisioned. At best, it would be a leaky roof. It might fend off thousands of Soviet warheads, but many would sneak through it. Many more—launched from nearby subs or from airplanes—would sneak under it. And even if these latter warheads were fended off with a new, expensive, ground-based defense system, the system would by all accounts be porous. Assuming all this defensive technology performed well, an all-out Soviet attack would probably succeed in peppering the United States with two, three, four hundred nuclear warheads, maybe even a thousand or two. That's enough to diminish significantly the quality of life in America. In fact, the devastation would be sufficient that anyone lucky enough to survive it would be hard pressed, after surveying the remains of American civilization, to sing the praises of Brilliant Pebbles with much conviction. In other words, if there is any virtue at all in Brilliant Pebbles, it has to lie in the ability of an imperfect space shield to decrease the chances of a nuclear war starting in the first place.

Brilliant Pebbles could conceivably have that effect. If the highly accurate warheads on the Soviet Union's SS-18s had to pass through a random filter, Soviet leaders pondering a first strike would have little confidence that they could wipe out America's land-based missiles,

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a confidence that is one of several prerequisites for a "rational" Soviet attack. If Brilliant Pebbles did in this way reduce the chances of nuclear war, that would be a laudable accomplishment. But it's something we can accomplish with a lot less sweat—and with much greater confidence—by merely making some of our land-based missiles *inherently* invulnerable to a first strike. That is: make them a moving target—put them on wheels.

The weird thing is that Cheney *does* plan to make some of our land-based missiles mobile. Indeed, he plans to do so on two fronts. In the near term he wants to put ten-warhead MXs in garrisons from which they could be flushed onto the nation's railways in time of crisis. And in the long term he wants to build the single-warhead Midgetman, which can ride around on a big truck. This somewhat redundant mobility seems wasteful on the face of it, since both of these plans cost billions of dollars, and either is supposed to ensure that no sane Soviet leader would start a nuclear war. One explanation for this two-pronged approach is that it is a Byzantine plot to ensure the deployment of Brilliant Pebbles in the face of strong countervailing logic. Before fleshing out this disturbing prospect, let's look at two more benign explanations.

Theory one. Bush is a wimp. Redundant mobility may merely reflect the president's failure to take charge. Cheney and the Pentagon wanted the rail-mobile MX, but many Democrats in Congress, as well as national security adviser Brent Scowcroft, wanted the Midgetman. Bush wanted to keep everyone happy, so he went for both. This theory has the advantage of being consistent with Bush's basic character.

Theory two. Bush is a sly fox. Redundant mobility could be a crafty ploy that will pay off during arms talks with the U.S.S.R. According to this theory, the Bush administration will just *pretend* it's going to mobilize multiple-warhead missiles, and use that threat to get the Soviets to cash in their existing mobile multiple-warhead missiles (the SS-24s). Then, once we proceed with the Midgetman, both sides will have mobile single-warhead missiles (the Soviet Union already does—the SS-25). In terms of stability, this would be a clearly better world than the one we live in: bilateral mobility, combined with a bilaterally lowered ratio of warheads to missiles (which, for reasons that aren't worth going into, is a good thing in itself). The obvious drawback of this theory is that it posits a combination of canniness and right-mindedness that has not often been observed in the course of human history.

Theory three. Cheney is a dirty dog. This less benign explanation holds that the MX-Midgetman compromise is a backdoor pass to Teller and Wood. The scenario is as follows. The United States deploys the mobile MXs within a few years. Everyone is briefly happy. But then someone points out that mobile MXs have a shortcoming: it takes a few hours to get them onto the railways in times of crisis, so they could get caught dead in their tracks by a truly surprise Soviet attack. So, Cheney will say, we need to do more in the name of deterrence. We can either proceed with plans to deploy the Midgetman, which can mobilize in minutes; or proceed with Brilliant Pebbles. Lo and behold: research on Brilliant Pebbles has advanced far and fast. So, Cheney will say, let's scrap Midgetman and go with the pebbles. After all, if the current lies about the pebbles' likely price tag are still being believed in a few years, he'll be able to argue that its projected cost of $25 billion is no more expensive than the Midgetman and may be cheaper.

This last theory has the disadvantage of sounding a bit paranoid, but in its favor are two things: (1) Cheney's long-standing and unnuanced support of SDI; (2) the skewed budgetary priorities Cheney has set: if he gets his way, nearly $5 billion will be spent on Star Wars research next year, while only $100 million will be spent on Midgetman (and $1.2 billion on MX mobilization). You almost get the impression that Cheney's heart isn't in this Midgetman thing.

What would be wrong with a world in which Brilliant Pebbles, rather than the Midgetman, served to deter a Soviet first strike? About a half dozen things, of which we'll list the most significant. For starters, it is possible that Brilliant Pebbles could make war *more* likely. If the Soviet Union placed great confidence in the pebbles (more than they deserve, for example), it might worry that we'd use them as a shield behind which we could launch a first strike. This worry could make the Soviet trigger finger a bit itchier in times of crisis. Another drawback of Brilliant Pebbles is that they'll pollute outer space with lots of floating hardware. This is more than an aesthetic concern. There is a real possibility that a single big collision in a very crowded outer space could send many fragments flying and trigger a chain reaction that would end up destroying scores of weather satellites and surveillance satellites, along, perhaps, with a space station or two.

And then there is the big, looming worry that has always hovered in the background of SDI: an arms race in space. Leaving aside the obvious financial waste of a heavily militarized outer space, and leaving aside its pathetic symbolic message about the failure of the human species to master its destiny, an outer space full of weapons would make for a less stable world. Any space weapon that can shoot down missiles or warheads can in principle shoot down satellites, and the ability of each superpower to blind the other by destroying surveillance satellites makes a successful nuclear attack more thinkable, and nuclear war therefore more likely. This danger, it's worth noting, also accompanies land-based SDI technology; just about any defensive missile or laser could destroy low-orbit satellites. This is one of several reasons why even the less visionary versions of Star Wars have their liabilities.

As things stand, the U.S.S.R. has a very rudimentary anti-satellite technology, and the United States has a slightly less rudimentary but not deployed anti-satellite technology. It is not too late to negotiate a treaty that would keep this small-scale threat to satellites from growing. (The verification would be tricky, yes, but doable.) But if SDI testing and deployment proceed very briskly, an anti-satellite arms race of soon-to-be-unstoppable momentum will ensue.

The right-minded thing to do about all this is fairly clear. First, cut Star Wars spending by about half (the recent "cuts" that Cheney announced are cuts only in comparison to Ronald Reagan's gung-ho projections). Then start negotiating about anti-satellite weapons.

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Meanwhile, dispense with the mobilization of the MX missile altogether, and put our money on Midgetman. Midgetman is the costlier of the two, but it's the ultimate in invulnerability, and thus the best deterrent and the best antidote to Star Wars fever. Given the amounts to be saved with these cuts in SDI and MX mobilization, this strategy would on balance save money. The reason is that Midgetman deployment needn't be a crash program. After all, the only compelling reason for insulating our land-based missiles from a Soviet strike in the first place is to guard against the day when the sea-based and air-based legs of our deterrent triad become vulnerable. That won't happen for many years.

One thing that would be an immense mistake is to do what some in Congress seem increasingly to favor—scrap *both* mobilization schemes. The problem isn't just that ten years from now a reinvigorated and once again hostile Soviet Union (it's not impossible) would be able to push around an America that lacked a secure deterrent. The problem is also that, if such a Soviet Union emerges, and the United States lacks a secure deterrent, the Lowell Woods of the world will be able to scare Congress into a rush to militarize outer space with a crash SDI program.

Even with Midgetman on line, SDI's backers will be busily coming up with rationales for Brilliant Pebbles. Here's a sampler. (1) Pebbles could guard against an accidentally launched Soviet missile. (2) Pebbles could protect us against nuclear-armed "crazy states." (3) Pebbles would prepare us for the day when even mobile missiles will be vulnerable to "smart" warheads. As for (1) and (2): if we're really worried about accidental launch and crazy-state attack (and both prospects are revealed upon close inspection to be less likely than they may sound), then a ground-based defense system would be simpler and cheaper. As for (3): yes, enemy warheads may someday be able to tail our Midgetmen as they roll down the street. But that's at least a quarter century away. Even a minuscule budget for ongoing Star Wars R&D would be enough to protect against that day.

In short, once the present rationale for Brilliant Pebbles is seen for what it is—i.e., empty—its advocates are forced to cling to a number of rationales that are, for the time being at least, comparably flawed. These flaws may eventually become clear to all. But by that time, SDI advocates will have dreamed up another technology to serve as a debate diverter.

NOTEBOOK

A JURY WITHOUT PEER: The most impressive people in the courtroom where the trial of Oliver North was held, it turned out, were neither the prosecutors nor the defense attorneys, neither the judge nor the jut-jawed defendant, but rather the nine women and three men who rendered the verdict. If the lies and crimes leading to the trial were symptomatic of the breakdown of the government system, the (literally) prayerful deliberations of the jurors—representative if not "average" citizens of the District of Columbia—were a vindication of the jury system. Interviews with the jurors afterward made it plain that they approached their work with not only a sense of responsibility for the justice owed the man on trial but also a due regard for the political health of the country. (This was, after all, a "political" trial, which is not at all to say it was an unjust or an unwarranted one.) The jurors convicted North of the acts he committed on his own: obstructing Congress, destroying documents, accepting the "illegal gratuity" of an expensive security fence around his house. But by absolving him of the acts they were satisfied he committed at the behest of his superiors, they in circuitous fashion "convicted" those very superiors, perhaps up to and including Presidents Reagan and Bush. At least one Republican congressman complained that North had not had a jury "of his peers." Maybe this was merely a reference to the fact that the jurors had not watched North's bravura performance at the Iran-*contra* hearings. Maybe, despicably, it was a reference to the fact that all the jurors were black. But the only discernable way in which these jurors seemed not to be North's "peers" was in their manifest grasp of common sense. "North was a good Marine, and he was a good man," one juror, a civilian secretary who works at the Pentagon, told a *Washington Post* reporter after the verdict. "But the fence bothered me. I work for the government, too, and we all know you cannot receive gifts. . . . He is just like the rest of us." North should be grateful for the compliment.

ACTION JACKSON:

Jesse Jackson Hints At Running For D.C. Mayor
—*St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, April 30

Jackson Has No Plan For Mayor Race
—same paper, same day, next page
(thanks to several readers)

Now is no time to nickel-and-dime democracy.

ENDOWMENT DRIVE

By Morton M. Kondracke

With Vietnamese troops scheduled to leave and a new struggle for control of Cambodia about to begin, former anti-war activist and Amnesty International official David Hawk would like to set up a network of human rights monitors in that country similar to the networks that inform the world about abuses in Central America, Eastern Europe, and the Philippines. Hawk has put in for a $250,000 grant from the National Endowment for De-

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mocracy to set up the network. He'll get only $25,000 because NED, with a budget of only $15.8 million with which to help democrats all over the world, hasn't got more to give.

Similarly, a New York-based group called the Center for Democracy in the U.S.S.R., which publishes an English-language translation of the magazine *Glasnost* in the West and distributes computers, books, and money to human rights and pro-democracy activists in the Soviet Union, will get at most $150,000 of the $900,000 it has requested to expand its programs—especially to furnish desk-top publishing systems, facsimile machines, and video cameras. Other fledgling democrats in Hungary, Poland, Tibet, and Afghanistan who have looked to NED for funding are likewise getting shortchanged.

That's a pity. There is at least $100 million worth of work to be done helping democrats around the world—remember, nearly $300 billion is being spent on weapons and $12 billion on conventional diplomacy and foreign aid. And NED is the agency most capable of doing it. A remarkable gathering of world democrats on May 1 and 2 in Washington demonstrated that now is the time to do so in earnest.

Founded in 1984 after Ronald Reagan's 1982 "crusade for freedom" speech before the British Parliament, the privately run, government-funded NED has never been granted the financial wherewithal to live up to its promise. This year looks like it will be no different. On April 12 the House voted 216-209 to hike next year's authorization to $25 million (still below the $31.3 million a year promised in 1984 by Congress), but Gramm-Rudman pressures are likely to prevent an actual increase unless the administration reverses course and pushes for it.

Although most of the 209 representatives who voted against an increase in the NED budget seem to have done so for budgetary reasons, some liberal Democrats still view NED as right-wing in origin and management. Others oppose NED's organizational structure, wherein four institutes created by the Republican and Democratic parties, the AFL-CIO, and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce spend three-fourths of NED's budget and also help to decide what programs to fund. And some House opponents such as John Conyers of Michigan and Paul Kanjorski of Pennsylvania object to it on the philosophical grounds that the United States has no business "meddling" in the internal affairs of other countries.

As a matter of fact, NED does intervene in the internal affairs of other countries, and sometimes they do not like it. The Polish government tried to brand Solidarity a "tool" of the United States because the union has received steady support from NED—$400,000 a year from regular appropriations, plus $4 million in special appropriations by Congress—and it tried to force the union to give up NED support as a condition of legalization, which Solidarity refused to do. Newspapers loyal to the Pinochet regime in Chile similarly tried to discredit the Campaign for the No in last October's plebiscite because of $1 million in special aid voted by Congress and channeled through NED for voter registration, polling, and technical assistance. And Nicaragua made receipt of NED money punishable by a jail term, though it's been forced to suspend the law under pressure from other Central American governments. The Sandinistas still accuse NED beneficiaries, such as the independent newspaper *La Prensa*, of being allied with the CIA.

The difference between NED-style intervention and that of the CIA, though, is that NED's is public (every grant application is available for inspection), nonviolent, approved by a board that is independent of U.S. government direction, and solicited by a preexisting internal or émigré group on behalf of prodemocratic (not merely anti-communist or anti-government) forces in various countries. NED does not bribe officials, plot coups, or fix elections. NED President Carl Gershman says his organization has no CIA ties, and does not give aid to groups identified to him by the State Department as being funded by the CIA.

Gershman, once an aide to United Nations Ambassador Jeane Kirkpatrick and a leader of the neoconservative group Social Democrats USA, aroused intense suspicion among liberals early in his tenure. In its early history, NED did get into trouble when the AFL-CIO's Free Trade Union Institute helped a far-right student group in France and aided a presidential candidate in Panama. Now, it has rules against work in established democracies and against direct aid to specific parties during an election campaign. And the work NED has done in Chile and Paraguay—where it's helped the formerly banned Radio Nanduti—have convinced many liberals that it's no right-wing enterprise. Supporters of NED during the April House debate included such left-liberals as Ted Weiss of New York and Mervyn Dymally of California, as well as moderate liberals such as Howard Berman of California. In the Senate, NED's backers include Edward Kennedy, Chris Dodd, and Tom Harkin, who sponsored special NED aid to the internal opposition in Nicaragua. NED has even been attacked occasionally in the *Wall Street Journal* and *National Review* for encouraging democrats who don't support U.S. foreign policy.

If anyone wanted further proof of NED's worth, he or she need only have gone to the conference it staged in Washington this month. Participants from the world over demonstrated that democracy is no longer just a Western concept, and that NED's help is needed to promote it. As former Nigerian ruler Olusegun Obasanjo put it, "The natural instinct of mankind is for democracy. It is the choice that the governed always prefer, even when it is denied by the government."

According to Larry Diamond of the Hoover Institution, co-editor of NED's forthcoming *Journal of Democracy* and a conference participant, the basic building blocks of democracy—including competitive elections, free expression, an independent judiciary, and reasonable social mobility—are now accepted by activists on every continent, even though different nations are at

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widely varied stages of constructing it. He argues that there is now something close to a science that governs how democracy can advance.

In the most closed societies, especially in Africa and some Communist societies, the first task is to establish "civil society"—a web of voluntary neighborhood and civic associations that break the ruling party or government's monopoly on information, organization, and power. After that, he said, activists can move on to create independent publications (of which dozens exist even in Czechoslovakia, some aided by as little as $100 in funding from NED) and alternative trade unions, business groups, and other organizations that can widen the political space for free activity and narrow the government's authority.

Next, according to Diamond, democrats can stage a drive for power-sharing, as Solidarity has successfully done in Poland, and eventually take power, as Solidarity one day may do. Diamond says that NED has been providing help at every stage of this process. Through its discretionary budget, NED itself funds many "civil society" and media programs. The AFL-CIO mainly supports unions and the Chamber of Commerce backs free-enterprise projects, while the Democratic Party's institute tends to fund clean-election efforts and the Republicans aid conservative party training institutes.

Diamond says that the May conference was an attempt to forge a "democratic internationale" from the various different national activist groups. The difference between this "international movement for democracy" and the various Communist internationales of the past, he said, is that this one is not directed from one center and fosters free expression of indigenous opinion, not uniformity. The NED conference did, however, provide role models, theorists, and enthusiasm for such a worldwide movement. The models included Jacek Kuron, a leading Solidarity activist now running for the Polish parliament; Milovan Djilas, the Yugoslavian dissident philosopher; and Violeta Chamorro, director of *La Prensa*. The theorists included Liang Heng, editor of a Chinese pro-democratic newspaper; Soviet exile Vladimir Bukovsky; and Polish exile author Leszek Kolakowski.

With communism crumbling as an ideology, democracy seems to be the wave of the future the world over. But as Kolakowski warned, "As much as we welcome the worldwide movement, it is best not to imagine that victory is imminent." He said that democracy remains threatened by the Soviet system, by the rise of "malignant nationalisms," by religious fundamentalism, by criminal violence and terrorism, and by economic and ecological pressures on the poor.

So there's work for the United States to do in aiding homegrown democrats with money, advice, and equipment. But some changes need to be made in NED to maximize its efficiency. Its board needs to be reformed so as to be less influenced by the four institutes and better able to turn down their program proposals. NED's own discretionary programs, representing just one-fourth of total spending, tend to be more creative than many institute efforts and probably should get a greater share. For political reasons, the board probably needs more liberals. And instead of creating high-visibility special funds for countries such as Poland, Nicaragua, and Chile—funds that attract opposition from host governments and also come out of foreign aid budgeted for other countries—Congress should simply increase NED's regular annual appropriation. If that's $25 million next year and $100 million three years from now, it's money well spent.

The loaded politics of cable TV.

WIRED

By Thomas W. Hazlett

Washington Mayor Marion Barry recently announced that the top two executives in the city's sole cable TV franchise will be working for him in their spare time. They'll be consultants, hired by the city to spruce up Barry's image. Hmmm.

However uniquely fishy this may sound, it isn't all that different—except in its lack of subtlety—from the shady symbiosis between politicians and cable TV franchises found all across the country. Though in most cities politicians don't actually pay cable officials in hopes of receiving access to the airwaves or favorable coverage, quid pro quos of various sorts are common.

How else do you explain the Florida Cable TV Association's opening a space-age studio just across from the state legislature? The "Sunshine Channel" will not only air such snappy shows as "The Governor Meets the Press" and "The Florida League of Cities"; it will give state legislators full editorial control of their own program. Don't expect them to feature a segment on their 1987 passage of a law protecting cable operators from upstart competitors.

The sleaziness of cable TV—ranging from palm-greasing in exchange for franchise rights to the steep rate hikes that an unregulated monopoly can impose—is nowhere better illustrated than in Washington, whose cable drama is now in its last act. And in no city is the illustration more useful, since it's up to Congress and the Federal Communications Commission to finally clean up the cable TV mess by exposing cable franchises to competition.

In Washington, as elsewhere, the lucrative monopoly on local cable business is auctioned off by the municipal government. This is an elaborate ritual, complete with Needs Assessment, Request for Proposals, consultants' reports, staff evaluations, public hearings. When the dust settles, city councilmen typically have little com-

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prehension of the data before them, so they go with what they know best: political juice. This is usually provided in the form of stock in aspiring cable companies. The stock isn't given directly to the councilmen (not usually, at least), which would be illegal. Instead it is given—or sold at bargain-basement prices—to their friends and associates.

In Washington's case, the list of "partners" in the winning company consisted of David Abramson, media adviser in Barry's election campaigns; John W. Hechinger, Democratic National Committeeman from the District; Ann Kinney, Barry's re-election treasurer; and dozens of others, including several of Barry's close confidants. This team reportedly walked away with 20 percent of the cable system's equity after contributing less than four percent of the initial investment.

The swapping of stock shares for monopoly rights (which is strikingly similar to the basic dynamic of Japan's Recruit scandal) figured into the cable franchising for most of the 82 percent of America that's now wired for cable. From the company's point of view, the giveaway is a can't-lose deal. The stock is in a shell corporation (often the subsidiary of a major cable operator) formed for the purpose of securing the local license. If the franchise is denied, the stock is valueless, but the parent company's shares are undiluted. If the franchise is awarded, the "investors" get rich, but not so rich that there's no money left for the company's principals. On the market, cable franchises routinely fetch over $2,000 per subscriber. Building the system usually costs no more than one-third that much. The rest is gravy—which explains why franchises are sought so intensely.

As cable agreements go, the Washington deal looked good—even to the *Washington Post*, which had been riding the City Council pretty hard on the delays and confusions in its franchising process. (Every year since 1971 the Council had taken up the cable question, but it didn't award a franchise until 1984.) The *Post* congratulated the Council on its "realistic" agreement, which sensibly avoided the "over-promised, gold-plated, impossibly-priced dream bids that other cities have fallen for and never seen."

Or so it seemed. The Washington deal called for a total capacity of 78 channels: 35-channel basic service for the low, low price of $1.95 per month; 63 channels for $8.95. And there were public-interest frills: eight public-access studios, and public-access programming subsidies of up to $1 million a year. Not bad. But as it turned out, District Cablevision knew when it offered these terms that this was a no-go deal. Having secured the franchise, it declared the plan unworkable.

This wasn't as nervy as it sounds. The company knew that another full round of franchising madness would be a great embarrassment to the Council. So it confidently embarked on a renegotiation campaign, requesting "givebacks" on the grounds that its financial backers just wouldn't spring in January 1985 for the terms agreed to in November 1984. Such is life after contract in cable. Warner Amex's Pittsburgh franchise deal, for instance, was immediately reopened post-award because of the "unforeseen" circumstance that three rivers would have to be crossed by the cable.

By the time the first D.C. couch potato flicked on his cable remote in September 1986, 78 channels had withered to 54, public-access subsidies had shrunk by more than half, the eight studios had disappeared, and the charge was $15 for 42 channels, not $8.95 for 63. (And who ever heard of $1.95 for cable—except in the public hearing phase?) If you reside in one of the 135,000 District households that can now subscribe to cable, you'll find rates still rising. The other 95,000 households are scheduled for completion in about a year. Assuming that actually happens, that would be one year ahead of schedule—so long as you're going by the re-re-re-revised franchise agreement.

This basic franchising ritual has played in more cities than "Barney Miller" reruns, ranging from down and dirty New York to pristine and progressive Minneapolis. Washington did add one truly original touch, however—sending the Cable Commission up in smoke in one of the District's annual coke & fraud scandals. The executive director, Antonio Pedro Ruiz, copped state's evidence on the cocaine charge and quit, while commission consultant Sylvia Potts was axed upon discovery that her little slip of paper from law school was just a slip of paper, period. After graduating from the commission, however, she revealed that Ruiz and the Cable Commission chairman had been meeting privately with bidders during the franchising process, making something of a mockery of the public auction. The issue was resolved when Ruiz determined that his records for the period in question had "disappeared."

The heart of the problem with cable TV is that companies get the obvious benefits of a monopoly—a captive audience—with none of the nagging regulatory drawbacks; ever since the cable industry pushed the 1984 Cable Act through Congress, municipalities have been powerless to control prices and service. The solution to the problem is simple: competition. Introducing competition into local video markets would take the windfall out of franchise awards, and thus put an end to the payoffs that are now the norm. It would put the scramble for profit back into the market, where it belongs.

There is a textbook economics argument against such competition: it is societally inefficient to have two or three TV cables laid next to one another; cable TV is a "natural" monopoly just as the power and water utilities are. This is an arguable proposition, but even if you buy it, the case for competition is strong. One reason is that the second TV cable, the one that would theoretically be wasteful, is already being built by regional phone companies. While our current narrowband copper telephone lines can't carry video signals, literally hundreds of channels can be poured into fiber optic wires, the new generation of lines. In two or three years some phone companies will begin laying fiber optic lines all the way to the home in new residential developments. Within a few decades, virtually the whole nation will be wired. So the Baby Bells could come into cable markets as second entrants. Or, given the immense capacity of fiber optics, the Baby Bells could serve as common carriers, leasing channels to programmers or competing cable companies on a one-price-serves-all basis.

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The FCC has tentatively endorsed the first of these two alternatives. Final approval is still some time away (Judge Harold Green's consent is needed, not to mention Congress's). But already the proposal has scared the living daylights out of the cable industry. Local politicians also have misgivings about competition; once there's no monopoly to grant, they don't have clout. On the other hand, most of them long ago granted their monopolies, and don't have much remaining leverage. Besides, they're so steamed about the cable companies' many broken promises that they wouldn't mind causing the industry some pain. So the National League of Cities is backing the entry of the Baby Bells into the cable business—but insisting that they must win a franchise from each city they enter. The franchising requirement will not only give the cities clout with the Baby Bells, but restore their leverage over existing franchisees.

The National Cable Television Association can already be seen groveling to get back into the good graces of local officials—who, they figure, can most cheaply be convinced to fend off the Baby Bells. This means getting serious about buying community goodwill. So look for more "civic contributions"—hiring the well-connected, giving incumbent Council members their own channel to program, televising the mayor frequently. Don't be shocked if before long you turn on the TV and hear, "Live, from Washington, It's . . . *the Marion Barry show!*"

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WHITE HOUSE WATCH

SUNUNU AND IMPROVED

By Fred Barnes

John Sununu made friends with Tony Coelho the hard way. Sununu, then governor of New Hampshire, and Coelho, the House Democratic whip, were surrogates in last year's presidential campaign. They debated on television ten times, Sununu for George Bush and Coelho for Michael Dukakis. For the first three debates, they were in separate cities (connected by satellite), but they got together at the CNN studio in Washington for the fourth one. They chatted. Both of them, it turned out, are fans of Zamfir, the pan flute player whose records and tapes are sold on CNN ("Call 1-800- . . ."). When their debate in Washington was over, Sununu said, "Let's keep in touch."

They did. A few days after the election, Coelho called Sununu. They talked warmly. A more crucial conversation occurred on January 19, the day before Bush's inauguration. Coelho telephoned Sununu, who'd already been designated as Bush's White House chief of staff. Coelho said he knew Bush would extol bipartisanship in his inaugural address. Great. But he didn't like what he'd heard Bush would do after that, namely announce his budget negotiators on January 21, then zing Democratic leaders in Congress three days later for not appointing theirs. "This isn't the way to develop the trust we've been talking about," Coelho complained. Sununu heard him out, and the ploy was canceled. Weeks later, Bush and Democratic honchos named their negotiators simultaneously.

My point in mentioning Sununu's friendship with Coelho is not that it led directly to the budget agreement. It didn't. Rather, it's interesting for what it tells about Sununu: as chief of staff, he's not what he was cracked up to be. The early rap on Sununu was that he'd never get along with Congress, that he's smart but also arrogant, that he's overbearing, even tyrannical, and that he's so obsessively ideological that he'd never make it in Washington. And this wasn't just what Sununu's enemies thought. Practically everyone in the political community, especially reporters, figured Sununu would be among the first to leave the Bush administration.

Don't hold your breath. Sununu has turned out to be an effective chief of staff, but not in the way folks came to expect in the Reagan era. Under Reagan, the fellow in charge of the staff ran nearly everything. He was deputy president. Under Bush, Sununu runs the staff, and not even all of it. Bush doesn't go through Sununu to deal with aides and Cabinet members. He talks to them directly (unlike Reagan). Sununu has taken this in stride. What he's done, says Sununu, is "structure the system to reflect the needs and the personality of the president—his working style." It's a system where the chief of staff is an administrator and implementer first, a policy-maker second. Sununu has adapted to Bush, not vice versa.

Sununu isn't exactly a eunuch. He spends roughly one-third of his time in Bush's presence. So he has influence. And there are no rivals for his job. Sununu has worked hard to prevent factionalism from cropping up. Probably the only person on the White House staff with enough smarts, experience, and political skill to challenge him is Richard Darman, the budget director. But Darman and Sununu are allies. Before the senior staff meeting at 7:30 a.m., they get together in Sununu's office for a strategy session. "I turn to Dick Darman for advice across the board," says Sununu. Darman was happy to find a kindred, brainy spirit, and one so willing to listen. "They recognized that each can help the other be successful," says a senior White House official.

To survive in Washington, a senior administration official needs cordial—or at least not openly hostile—relations with Congress and the press. Sununu has courted Congress, and he's just beginning to schmooze the press. In the first 14 weeks of Bush's presidency, Sununu traveled to Capitol Hill 11 times, often to House GOP whip meetings. "He's met with more members of Congress and conservatives than any chief of staff during the Reagan years," says Paul Weyrich of the conservative Free Congress Foundation. During the fight over John Tower's nomination as defense secretary, Sununu forged a close relationship with Senator

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Bob Dole. Still, Sununu says "the hardest thing" about his job is getting "an intuitive feeling of how to interpret commitments by members of Congress." He was burned on Tower. "I thought we had more votes than we had. In six years as governor of New Hampshire, I'll bet I can count on the fingers of one hand the times someone told me they'd vote our way and then didn't." Live and learn.

Sununu is leery of the press, and the feeling is mutual. Reporters regard him as (eminently) assailable. And why not, given the recent history of chiefs of staff and Sununu's reputation as, in the words of James Gerstenzang of the *Los Angeles Times*, "a short-tempered autocrat"? The press is ready to believe the worst about Sununu. When he encountered Coelho at the swearing-in of Richard Cheney as defense secretary, Sununu asked, "How's my socialist friend?" It wasn't funny, but Coelho took no offense. However, reporters were soon pursuing a story that Sununu had viciously attacked Coelho. In any case, Sununu is highly accessible and even informative. He told me that he gives his opinion on a policy issue to Bush "only when asked." Well, on what issues were you influential when asked? To my surprise, he ticked off four specific issues. That's the kind of stuff reporters love.

DRAWING BY VINT LAWRENCE FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

Sununu's amiability is now legendary at the White House, if only because it was totally unanticipated by most of his colleagues. "One of the amazing things is everybody I know likes him," says Marlin Fitzwater, the press secretary. Fitzwater likes Sununu, too. There's a Dale Carnegie quality to Sununu's charm—he's being nice because it pays to be—but it works. "He's quite witty. He loves puns," says a senior official. Maybe that's what prompted Bush to say that he picked Sununu as his chief of staff because his name rhymes with "deep doo-doo."

Sununu hasn't thrown his weight around. His style at meetings is to let others speak before he wades in to make his points. When Bush invited economists to Camp David for a weekend of discussions in late April, Sununu was deferential. Every time he spoke up, he began, "I'm not an economist, but . . ." Then he made it clear that he disagreed with Paul Volcker, Herbert Stein, and others on the virtue of raising taxes. Sununu has been careful not to step on the toes of Brent Scowcroft, the national security adviser. He's been particularly kind to Vice President Dan Quayle, including him in important meetings. Sununu has also arranged for senior staff members who don't see Bush regularly to have lunch with him occasionally.

Sununu is the closest thing to a hard-core conservative on Bush's staff. "He does advocate our issues internally," says Weyrich, the New Right leader. "That's what he tells us." That's what he actually does. "He doesn't rant and rail in meetings the way Pat Buchanan used to," Fitzwater says. "In this setting that makes him more effective." Sununu was pivotal in getting full-blown administration support for Star Wars. At the behest of pro-lifers, he blocked, temporarily at any rate, the nomination of Robert Fulton as assistant secretary of health and human services. Fulton is HHS Secretary Louis Sullivan's choice. Sununu has been tireless in pushing Bush's "no new taxes" pledge. He brokered the deal that led to Bush's pledge to veto a boost in the minimum wage past $4.25. And so on.

But while Sununu hasn't lost his ideological zeal, it's been curbed. On April 30 he went out of his way on "Meet the Press" to distance the White House from Cheney's prediction that Mikhail Gorbachev would fail in his reform efforts in the Soviet Union. "I don't think that's the president's view," he said. Conservatives, including Sununu's pal Weyrich, were outraged. Sununu didn't have any choice. The day before, he'd been with Bush in the White House living quarters when the president spoke to Cheney by phone. So he knew what Bush had told Gorbachev last December in the New York summit. Gorbachev had said that American leaders were hoping his reforms would fail. Bush and Reagan insisted they want him to succeed. Now, Bush doesn't want anyone in his administration suggesting otherwise. Sununu may have disagreed, but he carried the message anyway. •

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POSTCARD LONDON

MY GIRL

By Michael Elliott

Margaret Thatcher celebrated her tenth anniversary as Britain's prime minister on May 4. She is the country's longest-serving leader of the 20th century; to find someone with a longer unbroken hold on the top job, you have to go back to Lord Liverpool's dire times after the Napoleonic wars. She dominates British life, so naturally her decennial was marked by a Niagara of books, television programs, and newspaper articles. Yet in most of the respects that count in Britain—late opening in the pubs, street parties—the day went unmarked. There was no outpouring of public affection or celebration.

There was a dinner with her MPs, and another one with her Cabinet. There was a photo opportunity outside No. 10 Downing Street in the morning. There were rather more of us than usual in the press gallery of the House of Commons on the afternoon of May 4, for prime minister's question time. The Conservative backbenchers were sycophantic; she was rude and hectoring; it was a normal day.

This all chimes with the conventional wisdom, which has long held that Mrs. Thatcher is respected by most Britons, hated by many, but loved by none. That, at least, is what those who are paid to interpret the mood of the nation—the academics and journalists—seem to think. Yet, years ago, a friend of mine told me a story that made me think that this truth was only partial. He was then a civil servant, the head of a minister's private office, and had been invited (with a couple of thousand others) to one of the annual "garden parties" on the grounds of Buckingham Palace. These bizarre events bring together representatives of the British middle class to look with longing on the queen—or so it is thought. In fact, said my friend, they ignored Her Majesty. But at the first appearance of Mrs. Thatcher, the ranks of the morning-suited bourgeoisie broke into frenzied and heartfelt cheers. He was aghast. Nine years on, I am more than ever convinced that Mrs Thatcher really is loved; you just have to look for it.

A good place to start is Loughton, to the northeast of London, where the city meets the Essex countryside. The suburbs here are as far from being tourist attractions as anywhere in England can be. Other Londoners find them mysterious. Almost alone among London's regions, the northeast is thought to be devoid of an identifiable character.

These suburbs are to Margaret L. Thatcher what Orange County was to Ronald Reagan. They were largely settled after the end of the war, by those who could escape from the slums of London's East End. They are white. Though many of the old-timers voted Labour when younger, the area is now solidly Conservative; the pub on one of Loughton's biggest public housing projects is called the "Winston Churchill." The people here are "flashy" (some of the biggest houses thereabouts—the ones with satellite dishes—are owned by gangsters). They are determinedly upwardly mobile. The new member of Parliament for the district is a secondhand car dealer who comes from Liverpool, learned how to play the system at Oxford, and now sends his son to Eton. A realtor told me recently, with pride, that there was not a single food shop left on Loughton High Street. Actually, he was wrong; there is one, but it sells only exquisite Belgian chocolates, individually wrapped for That Special Occasion. The barmen in the pubs wear tuxedos. Loughton is the kind of place where those over 60 have never left Britain, and those under 40 own villas in Spain.

If by any chance those under-40s left northeast London, and moved to the west—round Chiswick, Hammersmith, or Barnes—they would join the Riverside Club. Two years old, the Riverside has 24 tennis courts, a pool, a gym, saunas, bars, squash courts, a nursery. It holds "Caribbean Evenings" and "Spanish Barbecues"; its notice-board advertises nanny-shares, holiday homes on the Costa del Sol, skiing chalets in France. It is utterly nouveau. Those lounging around, mobile phones to the ready, are as likely to be reading the tabloid fizz of the *Daily Mail* or the *Sun* as the splendid dullness of the *Financial Times* or the *Independent*. Riverside is stuffed with music-business types, advertising agents, wives who were once secretaries and married the boss—but none of the old stereotypes you would expect at a tennis club.

More Britons than most Americans could ever imagine are snobbish about places like Loughton and Riverside. And I do not mean just Old Money. Many of Britain's liberal intelligentsia similarly detest the New Class. There is a certain kind of British intellectual who always says "acquisitive" (as in "I fear Britain is becoming a more acquisitive society") as if he had a dead fish in front of his nose.

So I was pleased when, last week, a distinguished American friend found the Riverside Club very nice—nicer than anything similar in Washington, he said. And he is not a bad bellwether. For when he first lived in England, in the early 1970s, not having fun, and not spending money, and not having good food or central heating, and not drinking champagne, was what being in Britain was all about. Before you could wallow in comfort and joy, you had first to cross a mental picket line of guilt.

For many Britons, those times had a shabby gentility. The problem was that if the British class system closed you off from the gentility (as it did), all you were left with was the shabbiness. Mrs. Thatcher has liberated those who wanted something more. You may not like the "more" they want—Belgian chocolates, tennis clubs, champagne, and villas in Spain, rather than roast grouse, hill-walking, claret, and villas in Tuscany—but that is their choice, and Margaret Thatcher put the cash in their pockets that enables them to exercise it. She

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does not patronize them. Loughton and the Riverside Club, in return, love her.

If all this sounds farfetched, I am prepared to concede that there is an alternative explanation of the love for Mrs. Thatcher. Half the men in the country, some observers argue, fancy her. This is not quite as daft as it seems. Photographs from the 1950s show a pretty, peaches-and-cream English rose—the kind who would have fallen for a rake in one of the early James Bond books. I have heard of only one man—a Scottish Labour MP, now dead—who openly boasted of having made a pass at her, and he would have made a play for a hole in a brick wall. But there is no denying her allure, which can break strong men.

The first time I ever met Mrs. Thatcher, I was notionally in her employ as a member of an apolitical policy unit in the Cabinet Office ("apolitical" is not a concept she understands, so we were all fired in 1983). With my boss and some others, we were asked to spend an evening talking strategy with her. It was six hours of hell. The key moment for me came when I had to say something—on technical education, I think. I had got half a sentence out when she said, "That is totally and utterly wrong." As my mouth started to open and close like that of a goldfish she dropped her voice, touched the back of my hand with her fingers, and murmured, "If I ever do that again, you must answer me back straightaway; it's the only way you'll win my respect." She then turned to my boss, a tall, thin, buttoned-up Englishman who had been silent until then, and barked, "Now, Mr. Bailey. Do you speak?" He blushed, and stammered. She got up, left the table, and, heading for the dining room, turned, as an afterthought, and said, "Mr. Bailey. Do you eat?" As the ground swallowed us both up, I had just enough time to realize that no man would have been able to wreck us quite so comprehensively. Still, Bailey got a knighthood a few years later, which is more than I ever did. Sometimes love has to be its own reward.

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For the white cause in search of the black vote.

BLACKSTABBERS

By Richard Blow

In 1987 voters in Washington, D.C., were asked to decide whether they wanted a refundable deposit placed on beverage cans and bottles. Until October the bottle bill seemed sure to pass. But that was before a group called the Clean Capital City Committee transformed a bland environmental issue into a civil rights crusade. The CCCC—a front group for beverage and bottling companies—claimed that the deposit was being foisted on Washington's majority black community by the city's affluent whites; the bill, the argument went, would hurt blacks more than whites, since blacks, having generally lower incomes, could less easily afford the extra nickel per bottle.

Actually, the opposite is more nearly the truth. Upper-income consumers are the ones who typically don't bother to return the bottles, and thus swallow the extra cost. Meanwhile, the homeless and the very poor go around plucking unreturned containers from trash cans and redeeming them. In the end, the deposit law would have amounted to a net transfer of income from rich to poor, and from white to black. Also, the bill would have helped clean up Washington's poor black neighborhoods, while creating new jobs in the recycling industry for low-skilled black workers. (And, of course, it would have furthered its stated purpose of conserving environmental resources.)

This simple logic wasn't enough to fight the CCCC's $3 million campaign. The group hired black ministers, black civic activists, and black politicians to appear in ads, and donated money to black churches and charities, conspicuously reinforcing its solidarity with the black community. Meanwhile, the law's supporters—environmental groups, mainly—raised only around $100,000. When the votes were counted, the bottle bill had lost decisively, with all the city's heavily black wards voting against it. The final ironic touch is that many of the companies funding the CCCC subsequently turned up on a list of companies banned from doing business with the city because of ties to South Africa—a ban supported by many, if not all, of the black leaders who took money from the CCCC.

This sort of campaign is becoming more common in grass-roots politics. In local and state political battles, white-dominated interest groups are trying to win votes by claiming solidarity with minorities, usually blacks. And it often turns out, as in the bottle-bill case, that the cause being advanced is probably more detrimental to black interests than in harmony with them.

Here's the generic game plan for white causes in search of the black vote. Start in a city with a large minority population and some racial tension—Chicago,

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New York, Washington. Set up a "grass-roots" activist committee—complete with a misleading, feel-good name—composed of local black leaders. Spend lots of money, but be discreet about its source. Argue that the issue at hand is an attempt by whites to subvert minority interests. Then wait for the votes to roll in.

The technique doesn't always work, because there is a risk of backlash. But it's used mainly when the proposed law seems a one-shot deal, so there won't be an occasion for subsequent fallout. And the businesses that employ the strategy—most notably the tobacco, alcohol, and gun industries—reserve it for times when they're the underdog and the stakes are high.

Certainly some of these industries have a long history of courting black support and funneling money to black organizations. Tobacco companies, for example, have long supported black colleges, cultural activities, and political groups. But where once these industries claimed they were allies of black causes, now they claim they *are* black causes.

The National Rifle Association, for example, has recently discovered its heretofore latent affiliation with the interests of poor blacks. Last year Maryland voters passed judgment on a "Saturday Night Special" law establishing a state-appointed board with the power to declare specific handguns illegal. Since polling showed that the law was strongly supported in white rural and suburban areas, the NRA targeted urban blacks. It channeled money to black-owned p.r. firms, radio stations, and newspapers. In black neighborhoods it hired street canvassers at six to ten dollars an hour. And it hired high-profile blacks for as much as $1,500 a week. Roy Innis, head of the New York-based Congress for Racial Equality, signed on. So did Cathy Hughes, a black Washington radio talk-show host who made her reputation leading a boycott of the *Washington Post Magazine* on grounds that the magazine had stereotyped blacks as violent. All told, the NRA spent $6.5 million. "This is democracy at its finest," said Steven Miller, president of a black p.r. firm hired by the NRA. The black leaders enlisted by the NRA, Miller said, "felt as a matter of conscience that this stand had to be taken."

To justify all these expenditures, the NRA needed a pitch tailored to black voters. The gun law, it (and its hirelings) claimed, was discriminatory. It would ban only the cheapest guns. Rich whites would be free to buy the handgun of their choice, but poor blacks would be unable to afford self-defense. "I saw them taking guns out of black people's hands in Maryland," says Hughes. "It was economic discrimination."

That's in some sense true, but not true enough to make up for the obvious hole in the NRA's argument. It's inner-city blacks, not suburban whites, who are paying the greatest price for the ubiquity of cheap handguns. They're the ones standing on the sidewalk when rival crack dealers break out the Saturday Night Specials. And they're often the crack addicts and small-time dealers who pay the death penalty for not keeping up with their bills. Guns are the leading cause of death among black men in Maryland aged 15 to 24.

Hughes says she was originally contacted by a group called the Concerned Black Citizens of Prince George's County, a largely black area in southern Maryland. The group asked Hughes not to reveal that she was getting paid for her efforts. It was only later, she says, that she found out that her check was coming from the NRA. But Hughes says she has no problem with the source. "The NRA is not the type of organization that's going to fight for blacks' rights," she says, "but I didn't see this campaign as being slanted towards blacks."

Maryland's black voters apparently disagreed. In what many said was a reaction against the NRA, the gun law was upheld by 3-to-2, with strong support coming from black urban areas. The politics of racial polarization had backfired; many black leaders (particularly ministers) gathered to fight the NRA more vigorously than they otherwise might have.

The success of pseudo-civil rights campaigns depends on the cooperation of local pawns such as Hughes and national pawns such as Innis. A white person telling inner-city blacks how they should vote for the sake of their race—that just isn't likely to convince. Fortunately for organizations like the NRA, some blacks have made a career of selling out. Consider William Keyes, founder of a Washington lobby called BLACKPAC. In 1984 Keyes worked as a political consultant to Senator Jesse Helms, a tireless opponent of civil rights legislation, even when it's as uncontroversial as extending the 1965 Voting Rights Act. Keyes has been quoted as saying, "Jesse's civil rights record doesn't bother me. There are a lot of blacks who don't put civil rights at the top of their agenda. I don't. . . . Who gives a damn anymore?" Keyes practices what he preaches. Last year he raked in $400,000 from the government of South Africa. His mission: to promote investment by black U.S. businessmen.

Some prominent blacks—Jesse Jackson, HHS Secretary Louis Sullivan, Michigan Representative John Conyers, Children's Defense Fund founder Marian Wright Edelman, and numerous black ministers, politicians, and doctors—have spoken out against minority dependence on corporate dollars when unpalatable strings are attached. And some have even gone head to head with corporations that falsely claim to have black interests at heart. Sullivan has taken on the tobacco companies, and Jackson has filmed an ad in which he asks the very good question: What has the NRA ever done for black people?

By far the most sophisticated practitioner of racial politics is the tobacco business, which lately has come up with a number of innovative claims of fraternity with oppressed blacks. You might think this would be hard. After all, blacks smoke at a higher rate than whites (35 percent versus 29 percent), and often die from it. How does an industry that once enslaved blacks and now spends much money to keep them enslaved to nicotine convince them that it's their best friend? It's hard, but not impossible.

The cleverest tactic has been to take the fact that blacks are disproportionately addicted to nicotine and turn it around to argue that any smokers' rights issue is therefore a civil rights issue. Thus, under the auspices of tobacco companies, black leaders have claimed that establishing smoking sections on airplanes is equivalent to

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making blacks sit "at the back of the bus." By a similar logic, black community activists and publishers have fought cigarette billboard and print advertising bans on grounds that black neighborhoods and publications would suffer most from the loss of income. (This is probably true. It's also true that black funeral homes would suffer more than white funeral homes if the crack epidemic were ended.) To contest local bans on the free distribution of cigarettes—on which tobacco companies spend more than $100 million a year—cigarette companies have trotted out black businessmen who hire young blacks to pass out the cigarettes.

In New York in 1987, the Tobacco Institute, the industry lobby, put together the Committee for Common Courtesy, a group of local blacks, to argue against a proposed smoking ban in all work spaces except private offices. Representatives from the New York NAACP and other black groups argued that the law would discriminate against minority workers, who are less likely than whites to have their own offices. That bill passed, but the Tobacco Institute had better luck fighting a similar bill in Washington, D.C., in the same year. After an industry representative argued that it would hurt minorities' chances of being hired, the bill was gutted.

The industry's most recent grass-roots battle came in California last fall, when it fought Proposition 99, an initiative to raise the excise tax on a pack of cigarettes from a dime to 35 cents. Tobacco companies spent $23 million trying to beat the tax. Much of it went to Roger Ailes, George Bush's former ad man. The heart of Ailes's campaign was to convince minority voters that excise taxes would hit them harder than it would hit white smokers.

This is true—not just because minorities smoke more than whites, but because their incomes are generally lower. But if you buy the rationale for a "sin" tax—that one of its purposes is to promote wholesome changes in behavior—then the people hit hardest by it are most likely to gain from it. In fact, it may well be that a higher tax on cigarettes, by reducing smoking among minorities, would on balance save minorities money in the long run, given the cost in health care and lost productivity of heavy smoking.

Ailes's campaign left no potential for racial divisiveness unexploited. Even as his firm was stoking black fears of discrimination, it also played on white fears of black crime. It produced ads saying that the tax would lead to cigarette smuggling by black California gangs like the Crips and the Bloods. And you know what that means—Uzis and AK-47s in Marlboro country. Ailes's efforts notwithstanding, Proposition 99 passed—though, thanks to him, the victory was less overwhelming than the 3-to-1 support the initiative originally enjoyed.

One reason businesses and lobbying groups get away with trying to manipulate minority voters is that the tactic puts their opponents in an uncomfortable position—leery of criticizing a company that claims to be promoting civil rights or of being seen by blacks as patronizing. Industry reps fan those fears. A recent issue of *Shared Perspective*, a Philip Morris house organ, quoted a Tobacco Institute spokesperson as saying, "The idea that cigarette smoking is somehow more seductive to blacks, Hispanics, and blue-collar workers than it is to whites, that somehow these people aren't capable of making the same intelligent decisions about smoking as any other group is offensive."

Yes, it is. That's why filling *Ebony* with cigarette ads is no more immoral than filling *Vanity Fair* with cigarette ads. But what is more immoral than either of those things is trying to make cigarette smoking—or gun buying, or bottle redeeming—an issue of black versus white, and then placing millions of dollars worth of opinion-molding technology in the service of racial polarization.

An ode to brick throwers and scab baiters.

GLORY DAYS

By Thomas Geoghegan

I rarely hear of strikes now, except those that end in disaster. None of the unions I represent has gone on strike in ten years, and I wonder if any of them ever will. Until the Eastern Airlines strike this year, I thought I might never see a strike again. Strikes in the United States last year fell to their lowest level in four decades. In 1974, which was no great year for strikes, there were 424 of them. In 1988 there were just 40, which is about the same as the number of prison riots.

A few months ago I saw my friend V., who is a lawyer with the Mineworkers. As labor lawyers, we sit and gasp in horror that there are no strikes any more. Our friends, people our age, in other professions, do not see the Orwellian horror of it. They think, if they think

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about it at all: "No strikes? What's so bad about that?" The question is so stupid, I can hardly deal with it.

V. and I are both about 40 years old, but we "remember" the 1930s. That was our formative experience, not the 1960s. I hoped at the Mineworkers, at least, they were still going on strike. I said to V., "Are they still striking?"

.He said, "Only in eastern Kentucky." In eastern Kentucky, they would not even know Reagan is no longer president.

I said, "Anywhere else?"

He shook his head and said, in a soft Alabama drawl, "It's a bad time." Most people in labor say it that way, softly, mantra-like: "It's a bad time." But, really, I'm not sure it will ever be a "good time" again.

No one can strike now, because there have never been more scabs. The scabs today are not just the unemployed, but those with jobs, too—people getting $3.75 an hour frying burgers, people who can triple their wage by helping to break a strike. And they are everywhere. As I write, unemployment is roughly five percent. In the old days, if unemployment were only five percent, there would be strikes all over a "union" town like Chicago, where I work. Instead, in the past year, I have heard less about strikes than about lockouts, when the employer locks out the union and almost begs it to strike.

When some people talk about labor's decline, they mention President Reagan's successful fight against the Professional Air Traffic Controllers Organization, the political climate, etc., but PATCO as a cause pales next to Reaganomics. Reaganomics created a pool of scabs as big as Lake Michigan. The United States in the '80s lost one out of three jobs in heavy industry, especially the old high-wage industries like steel and machinery. The administration's policies helped place U.S. heavy industry in a double bind: the high dollar made foreign imports cheaper, and high interest rates made it harder for industry to borrow money for modernization. It was the Midwest, labor's stronghold, that really suffered. Nobody outside the Midwest paid any attention. It was like an earthquake with a press blackout. I wanted to write letters to friends back East, get them to organize a Marshall Plan to rebuild the Midwest.

Now the wrecking is over, but in the post-Reagan, two-tier economy, the scabs are everywhere. After all, the ex-steelworkers have not gone away. The Steelworkers, in the Chicago area alone, lost over 70,000 members in the '80s. Under Carter they were union men, and then under Reagan they became boys: dishwasher boys, bellboys, shoeshine boys. Some of them are still in . . . well, "manufacturing." They dip their hands in strange chemicals, for five dollars an hour, with no health insurance. I meet old steelworkers who tell me they are "unemployed"—they honestly forget they have jobs. Some once made 15 dollars an hour and worked for a company that had a welfare state like Sweden's. Then they were union; I often wonder now if some of them would scab.

I read in the *Wall Street Journal* last June that despite a strong economy, unions that year might have to negotiate wage concessions. The *Journal* asked, almost incredulous: "How can unions be so ineffective, when the economy is growing steadily and living-cost rises would seem to justify raises of four percent or so?" The reason is that any union member who goes on strike now can expect to lose his job permanently, in 24 hours.

Take what happened at CDS Midwest, a shipping company in Chicago. The company had 90 or so employees, many of them over 40 years old. As a result, CDS was facing a big pension bill. When its labor contract was about to expire, CDS started hiring scabs, even though the union members said that they did not want to strike. Since they wouldn't strike, CDS had to lock them out. Then, after the lockout, it reopened again, in just a few days, with a brand-new complement of fresh, young scabs. It had replaced all the old workers who had had the audacity not to strike.

Sure, I know: How can they replace "skilled" workers? I once said that to a president of a local union, and he laughed. "Skilled? These guys have no real 'skills.' A man's got his seniority, and that's all he's got." His local, by the way, really *did* have skilled workers, but I was missing the point: when a man goes on strike, he is betting his whole life.

One union that took that gamble was at Danley Machine Tool in Cicero, Illinois. The strike at Danley was the old-fashioned kind: it was the good war, lasting nine months, like trench war in Flanders. A strike that lasts that long changes people utterly: it is like a sea voyage. Men get sea legs and become catlike and grow beards. Under the beards, they are still suburban middle-class people, but now they are starving, picking up bricks.

The Danley strike became a rallying point for most of us in organized labor in Chicago. First, because it almost broke the best local in the city. Second, because it was such a long, drawn out public agony. But most of all, because this was the one local that despite Reagan, despite everything, still wanted to fight, just like in the '30s. The rest of us in town, who did not want to fight, felt that at least, out of shame, we should go out there to Danley and give witness.

Danley makes machinery for the auto industry. In 1984, in machinery and in steel, employers were demanding concessions, and Danley, like everyone else, went to the union with a long list of "givebacks." It was not a big deal: all the unions were expected to go along.

Joe Romano, the Danley local president, whom I had known since the early 1970s, said to me later: "I took their demands, and then I went to our guys, and I laid it out to them. And I said, 'Look, here's what they want.' And one guy after another stood up and said, 'We've got no *right* to give that up. Our fathers, our grandfathers fought for that. We *can't* give that up.' " So the local elected to strike, by a vote of 670 to 12, when almost no other local did. It was going to be a nightmare.

Laramie Avenue in Cicero, where the strike was, would be a good place for a prison riot. There are miles of machinery plants, wire fencing, an American flag or two, and grim Gestapo-type signs that say things like "Solvent Building in Rear." The suburbanites who drive in and out of here every day seem to be on a kind of work-release program in reverse.

The Danley strike, like many others, was a waiting

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game and a numbers game. The local had 800 members: almost all of them went on strike and 200 or so of them later "crossed over" to the plant. But Danley could not operate until it had 100 or so more crossovers, or new hires, who were not just "skilled" but "highly skilled." These were people who could not be easily hired off the street. But it was not such a large number. Danley had to wait for the number of crossovers to add up, until the balance would tip and the factory could start up, like a crippled battleship, and sail away from the strike. Every striker would think about this, all day, for nine months: "What's the magic number? When does this fucking thing tip?"

They also thought about the cops. Throughout the strike, Danley had a private police force, as well as Chicago cops (off-duty, in theory) facing the strikers. This army, like the Pinkertons, who busted strikes in the 1890s (and still do), gave the strike a certain fin-de-siècle charm. They know how to push, to bait, to provoke the strikers, and then they call in the cops to make the arrests. They know "strike judo," and the suburbanites, who do not, who are amateurs, lunge and fall flat on their faces. Then the cops pick them up.

Sometimes at the office, I get brochures from the new yuppie union-busting consultants—like "Asset Protection Services." The brochures never say "union busting." They say instead that there will be a "frank discussion of de-unionization." I often wonder what these conferences are like. The "frank" part, I suppose, is when they tell them to go out and hire the Pinkertons, like Andrew Carnegie did in the 1890s.

There was only one real act of violence in the strike. One day while sitting in his car at a stoplight, Joe Romano was attacked and beaten. Two men in the car ahead of him simply walked back, smashed the car window, and tried to pull him out. Joe did not do too badly. He had a sawed-off pool stick in the back seat. Still, it bothered me that as a young lawyer, in the '70s, I had worked to get people like Joe into union office, and that now, in the '80s, they were being pulled out of their cars and beaten.

Hunger is the biggest problem. While miners in rural areas can grow food, Danley workers in Cicero could not. They had no Food Stamps or unemployment benefits. They only had the "strike fund." Sometimes, on Sunday, there was a rally at the gym, and other unions gave what they could to the strike fund. We all had our own problems. I was vaguely aware that some of the people in the gym were hungry.

Then the local got the cheese. As I hear it, the cheese almost eucharistically came from a Catholic priest. Nobody knows. I am simply told that a big truck, with several tons of cheese, pulled up to the dock and began unloading. The Danley management and the security guards stood across the street, watching in horror. But too much cheese is bad for you. One man said, "It stops you up, you can't take a shit. We had guys rolling on the ground." Too much cheese could have stopped up the strike. The local began swapping it: their main goal was fruit, bananas, anything with firepower.

So the strike went on and on. Families went hungry, lost nine months of income, and for what, really? There is a point when strikers know that even if they "win," they can never make up for all they've lost. Here they are, going hungry, and what is the point? No concessions? Everybody else made concessions. Why not them? But by now, they are no longer suburbanites. Now they are hunger artists.

At last, Danley and the local signed a contract. While this was a victory—there was even a small wage increase—the local had barely survived. Many strikers had lost their jobs through permanent replacements. The strikers who came back were a minority, a rump faction, of the Danley workers.

But even though the strike was over, Danley kept fighting. Some of the scabs had filed a petition with the National Labor Relations Board to "de-certify" the union as the bargaining agent. Danley now maintained that the union no longer had the majority support of the employees. The Board would conduct the "de-cert," and if the majority voted against the union, the union would be out.

In a way, the settlement of the strike had been a trap. Now the local, depleted, seemed doomed, because it needed the votes of the crossovers and scabs. The scabs should have hated the local. Every day they had been called "shit," "asshole," and other names unspeakable even to the children of Cicero. Yet when the "de-cert" vote was announced, the Danley workers voted, by a landslide, to keep the local.

The scabs had voted to go union. We call them scabs, but who are they, really? Often they are the blacks, the Latinos, who would love to be in labor. Often they are, in a sense, the poor, and maybe it is only as scabs that the poor can inherit the earth. All the better if, as at Danley, they can inherit the local, too.

Now the strike was over, and it was time for a party. On March 18 is the Feast of St. Joseph the Worker. Since the strike, on every St. Joseph's Day the local has had a banquet, or party, to remember the strike, remember its dead. Joe Romano sends out a letter of invitation, which is grave and dignified. Everyone who gets it tries to go. The food is astounding. This must be the only local in America that deserves two Michelin stars.

Every year, when I call the hall to check the time, I hear an old man's voice, with a thick Italian accent. Already, my mouth is watering. At the hall, people spill out on the sidewalk, and I squeeze through them to eat. I try the lasagna, the linguine, the lamb, the eggplant, the olives, the apple cake. And there are still two tables of food I have not even reached.

I remember the first St. Joseph's Day best. People kept coming up to Joe and hugging him. I have never seen so much embracing. I always wish at times like this I could have been born Italian. I asked Joe, "Do you think people's politics changed as a result of the strike?"

He said, "Oh yes, oh yes . . . it was wonderful what happened to people . . . I mean, like the wives. At first, they hated the strike. No money coming in, all of that. They came down here to the hall and said, 'Jesus, what's going on?' Then they saw what was happening. They saw the cops pushing around their husbands. After a while, the wives were the biggest supporters of the strike."

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Joe looked out at the crowd and said, "You know, in a union you've got to give people something." I was thinking about getting lasagna. "You know," he said, "during the strike, we had Thanksgiving dinner here. We had to. People didn't have any money, it was someplace to go."

I knew what he meant. Once, before the strike, the families here had been strangers to each other. Then they starved together, and now they were friends. They took trips together, went to dinners together. It was the experience of starving that the local had given them: paradoxically, on St. Joseph's Day, it had them coming back for more.

Some of the men in the local, on weekends, drove around to other strikes, to visit strikers, to give them food. They remembered how other people had done it for them. On the first St. Joseph's Day, the men from the other locals came back here to eat. Joe introduced them, and they stood up, embarrassed, and everyone cheered. Mostly they were old men, retirees, not from the Danley local, but just from "the Union," the big one. It was all one "Union," I realized, sitting there, full of pasta. These old men had taught us a lesson, and now the rest of us had to carry on. I felt such peace and contentment. "My God," I thought, "the Danley strike was wonderful." It also was a nightmare: 200 people lost their jobs.

In Washington, D.C., in the big unions, they are working, late into the night, on alternatives to the strike. The strike is dead. It cannot stop management, it cannot close the plant, even for 24 hours. Now, instead of

The Good War

Editor's note: During the 1930s, TNR *editor Edmund Wilson wrote a series of articles on labor unrest across the country. What follows is an excerpt from one of them, "Frank Keeney's Coal Diggers," first published in the July 8, 1931, issue of* TNR.

Ward is situated in a long narrow valley which runs back among the West Virginia hills. The walls are steep on either side and the end of the hollow is a blind alley. The Kelly's Creek Colliery Company owns Ward and the Paisley interests own Mammoth, another settlement further back in the hollow, where the houses are not even painted yellow and where the standard of living is lower than at Ward. The people who live in these houses mine coal from the surrounding hills. They work from eight to 12 hours a day and they get from $2.60 to $3 for it. They get paid not in United States currency, but in chicken-feed specially coined by the companies—little fake aluminum coins, thin and light and some of them with holes in the middle like the debased French and German currency that was issued at the end of the War. Even Andrew Mellon, who owns one of the mines in this field, pays his men in this imitation money. The company money is worth, on the average, about 60 cents on the dollar. The goods sold at the company store, which is the only place where the miners can trade, as the company will, of course, not allow any other store to be built on its property, are sold so much dearer than at the private stores only three miles away that the miners are never able to come closer than 60 percent to getting their money's worth. If they go out to the nearest little town and cash in their company money at a loss and buy some goods at a private store, as they occasionally do, they very quickly get laid off by the company. . . .

Lately leaders from [Ward's] mines and hollows, trained in the strikes of ten years ago, have become active among them again. There have been difficulties about getting them organized, though they have greeted their old leaders with enthusiasm: they can't hold meetings on the company property—even their church belongs to the company. So the organizers have had to go out to the blind-alley end of the hollow, where there is some land which is owned by an oil company. The oil company apparently doesn't care whether the coal workers organize or not. The miners would meet them there among the steep pyramidal scaffoldings of the oil wells, and build bonfires and sign up for the union. Now they have "speakin's" there every Sunday; but they have to have them in the afternoons, and, if possible, with the speaker's truck against something, for fear of bullets from behind.

The miners hail the organizers as wrecked men hail a ship. They are men, and the organizers are men. And the operators—who are they? They are corporations, interests, holding companies; vice presidents, stockholders, boards of directors; a controversy with Pittsburgh in the newspapers over the freight rates to the Great Lakes, a franchise guaranteeing a monopoly of the M.nneapolis docks; an office staff in a Charleston office building. The miners never see an operator—there is merely a legend that one once visited a mine on the occasion of a serious strike. The operators merely send out orders from Cleveland or Pittsburgh or Chicago that wages have to be cut, and they leave the rest to the superintendent—in the case of Ward reputed to be a former detective—who represents them at the mine. And as the operators have to make good to the stockholders, the superintendent tries to make good to the operators by paring the payroll down further—if necessary, by shortweighting the men. The only thing people know certainly about the operators is that they are all engaged in cutthroat competition with each other and that some of them are going bankrupt. Even at that, they can't sell their coal: there are great mounds of it lying around at Ward. According to the superintendent, there are nearly 500 carloads of coal standing on the tracks unconsigned and 400 carloads dumped on the ground.

EDMUND WILSON

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strikes, a few unions are trying "corporate campaigns." Instead of pickets, they may try lawsuits, proxy fights, or other approaches. The union, in other words, fights the strike like a shareholder. This is post-strike America: the rank and file stay home and send out their lawyers.

The D.C. lawyers, who represent the internationals, are ahead of the rest of us, who represent locals. When I come back from D.C., I feel like such a rube. What am I doing out here, dinking around with locals, instead of doing "corporate campaigns"? As we start to land, and I look out of the plane, it seems like Bedrock. Somewhere down there, I know, Fred Flintstone and Barney Rubble are still holding picket signs.

We live in a new age, I guess. Labor needs a new age approach, for the new kind of American boss, for men like Lorenzo, Icahn, and Trump, for men who, unlike the old robber barons, have no earthly estate, who appear in amber on computer screens for just a few seconds, and then are gone. It is hard for the old labor movement even to know where to put the pickets.

I once tried to get some clients, rank-and-file union members, to think about a "corporate campaign." I told them that if we bought stock, we could file lawsuits, etc. They looked puzzled. "OK, we'll buy stock," they said. A few days later one of the men called and said, "My stock went up."

"So?" I said.

"I want to sell."

"Don't you *get* it? This is a corporate campaign."

In Peter Ueberroth's failed attempt to purchase Eastern Airlines and settle its strike, the pilots and machinists were offered the chance to acquire more stock in return for wage concessions—a deal that has been a trend in the airlines industry. Long ago, at other airlines, the pilots and machinists began to acquire more stock, and as a result, these two unions are among the dwindling few that have kept their bargaining clout. In theory, the machinists should be no more powerful than, say, the mineworkers; but their stock ownership sets them apart. As a friend of mine said, "When the airlines wanted concessions, the machinists said, 'Fine, give us more stock.' When you own as much stock as the machinists or pilots do, it gives you a lot more options. Then the other side has to listen." The rest of the labor movement blew it. It passed up the chance to own stock. It was an incredible blunder.

I recently tried to explain this in Chinese. It was a few weeks ago, when I spoke to a visiting delegation of Chinese officials. Believe it or not, they wanted to talk to a labor lawyer. The Chinese were touring the United States and going to only three places: to New York, to see Wall Street; to Los Angeles, to see Disneyland; and to Chicago, to see . . . well, a bunch of rusted steel mills. They were shocked that our steel industry had collapsed. They could not believe our union members had permitted it. One of them asked, through an interpreter, "Why are American workers so powerless?" I thought, "You guys are the Marxists, you tell me." Another asked, "Why don't American workers own more stock?"

This was a very good question. I really do not know why American workers don't own more stock. The easy answer is, they were stupid, and it may be the real answer, too. There is something about organized labor, even now, that is peasanty, squinty-eyed, greedy, stuffing cash in mattresses because we don't trust the banks. I represent steelworkers who used to make $40,000 a year, and every week they cashed the checks in bars. It was inconceivable that they would ever take stock, or any funny-money. Co-ownership, co-determination, co-anything, that was all right for Europe, for labor in Germany or Scandinavia. But here it was better, more "American," to be an outsider. Better to be outside the stockholders' meeting, with a picket sign, with a cigarette dangling from your lips, like Bogart, like James Dean: better that than to go inside and get conned. Get the money up front. The attitude in labor was: collective bargaining is for adults, stockholders' meetings are for kids.

Once, in the 1940s, organized labor almost had a chance to buy up the country. John L. Lewis, the great Mineworker leader, was the Donald Trump of his day, and when Lewis set up the UMW pension fund, he had the money at last to be a player. The coal industry had no say in running the fund, and Lewis had total control of it. He began using the fund to buy up stock, buy up companies, even buy up a bank, the National Bank of Washington.

If Lewis had continued, and if the rest of labor could have followed, then the AFL-CIO today might own much of the country. There would be no need for Danley strikes. But when the Republicans took control of Congress in 1946, their first objective was to stop Lewis. The Taft-Hartley Act prohibited the UMW or any other union from controlling a pension. It is all right under the law for the *employer* to have exclusive control: it was only *union* control that was made, literally, a federal crime.

The right said that the UMW fund was a "war chest" or "slush fund" for Lewis and that they were only protecting the workers' money. In fact, they were protecting American business from a new threat, the threat of "union capitalism," a labor-dominated economy, with labor leaders like Lewis making the deals. Today, employee benefit funds, or ERISA funds, have enormous assets, the savings of the nation, but they don't empower labor. Without Taft-Hartley, the term "pension-fund socialism," coined mockingly by Peter Drucker, would not be a business-school joke. Lane Kirkland would be king of the junk bonds. The New Deal would have lasted a thousand years. And the AFL-CIO would be like Japan.

Strangely, after Lewis, after Taft-Hartley, the rest of labor did not even seek *joint* control of the new pension funds, which the act did permit. In steel, for example, like many other industries, the employer is in total, unilateral control of every pension fund, those giant, oozing ERISA honey pots of worker money. Even joint control could have made labor a more active investor, a little bit more of a player. I asked a Steelworkers staffer what happened, why didn't he seek joint control? He stammered, "Uh, well, that wasn't an issue for us . . . we, uh . . . there were other things we were interested in . . ."

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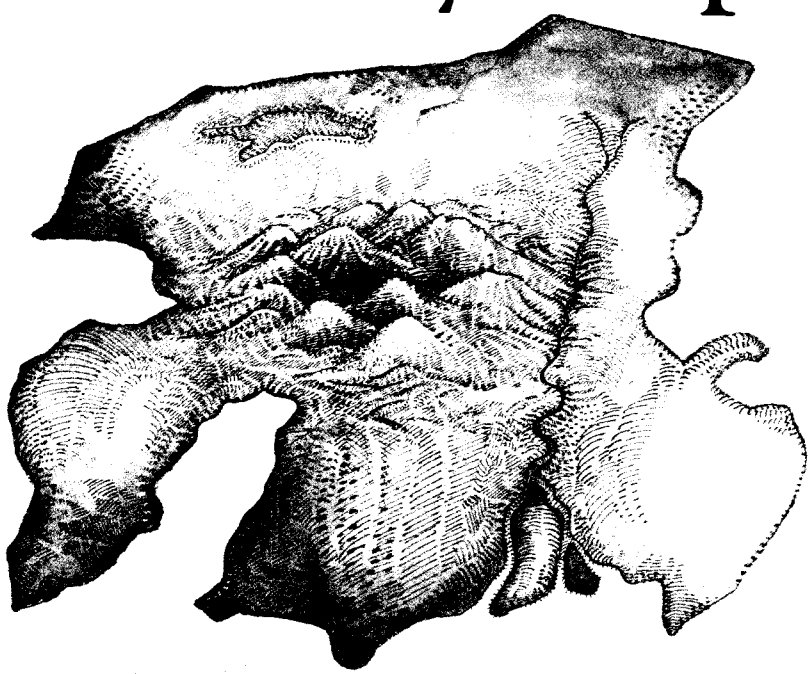
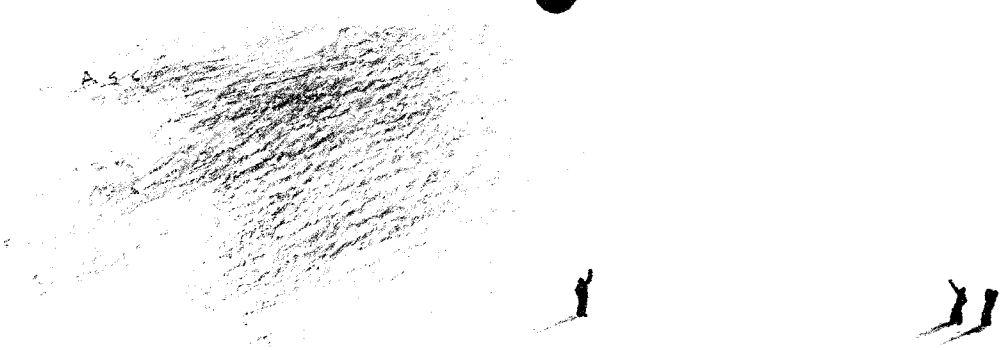
Why You Won't Find This Great State On Any Map.





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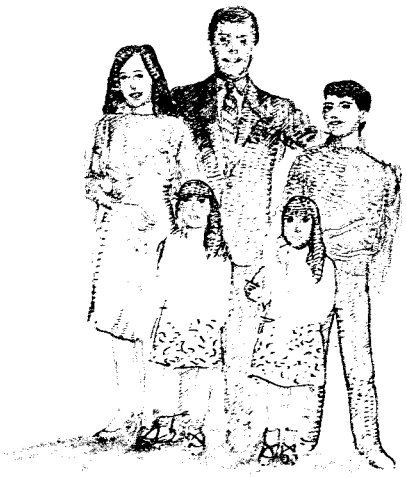
Because The State Of Life Insurance Isn't

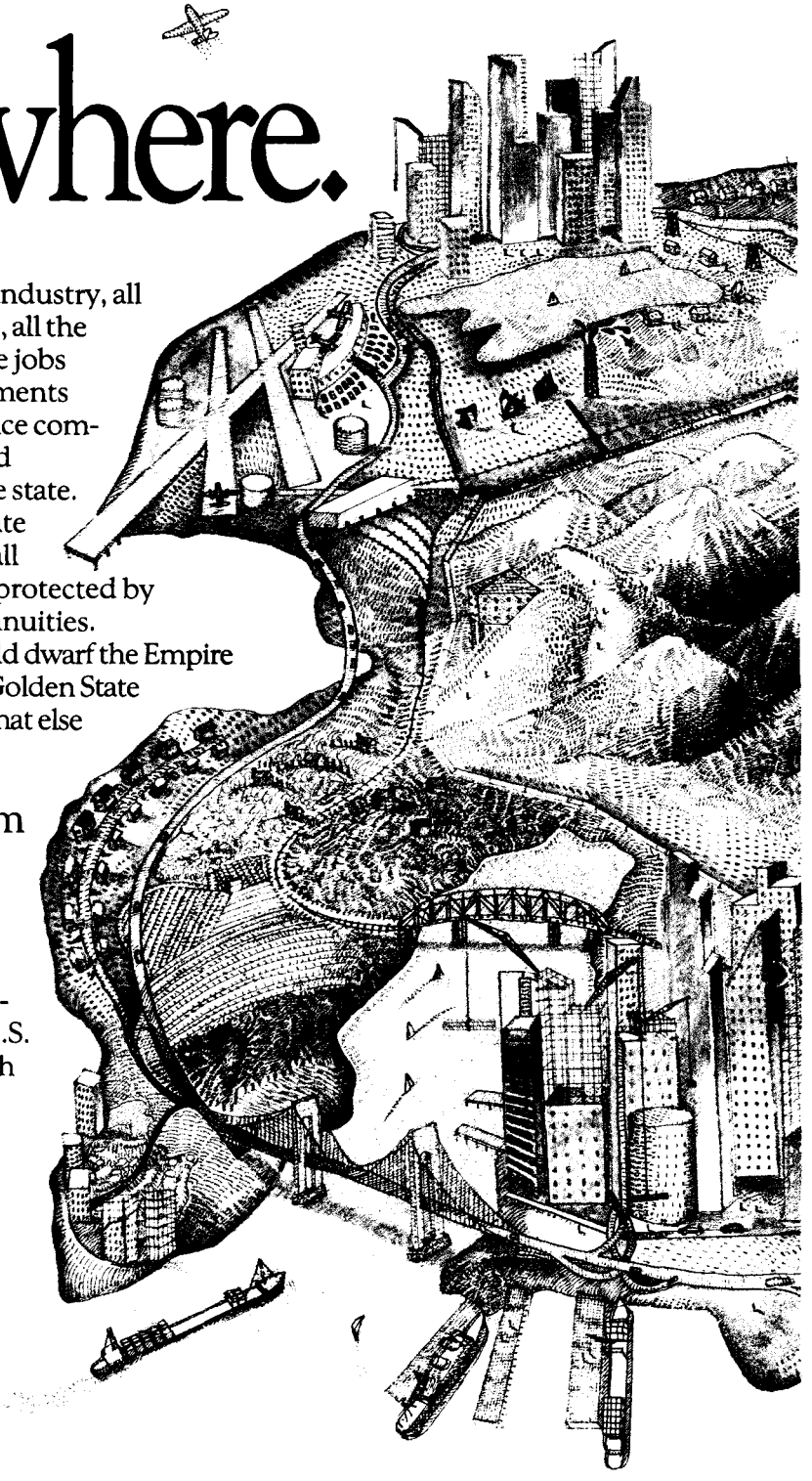
It's Everywhere.



Imagine if all the industry, all the small businesses, all the buildings, and all the jobs generated by investments made by life insurance companies were gathered together into a single state.

Imagine if that state were populated by all the people who are protected by life insurance and annuities.

Such a state would dwarf the Empire State and make the Golden State lose much of its luster. What else would you call it but the State of Security?



The Great State of Security grows from the state of security enjoyed by over 155 million Americans who own life insurance and annuities.

Today, far more families enjoy far more protection than ever before. Eighty-one percent of all U.S. households have some form of life insurance, with an average coverage of $110,000.

There are few better bargains. Since 1960, the cost of living has increased 300%, while the cost per $1000 of life insurance coverage has actually come down by 30%.

How big is the Capital of the State of Security?

By providing 12% of the available funds for America's capital markets (the second largest private sector source), life insurance companies

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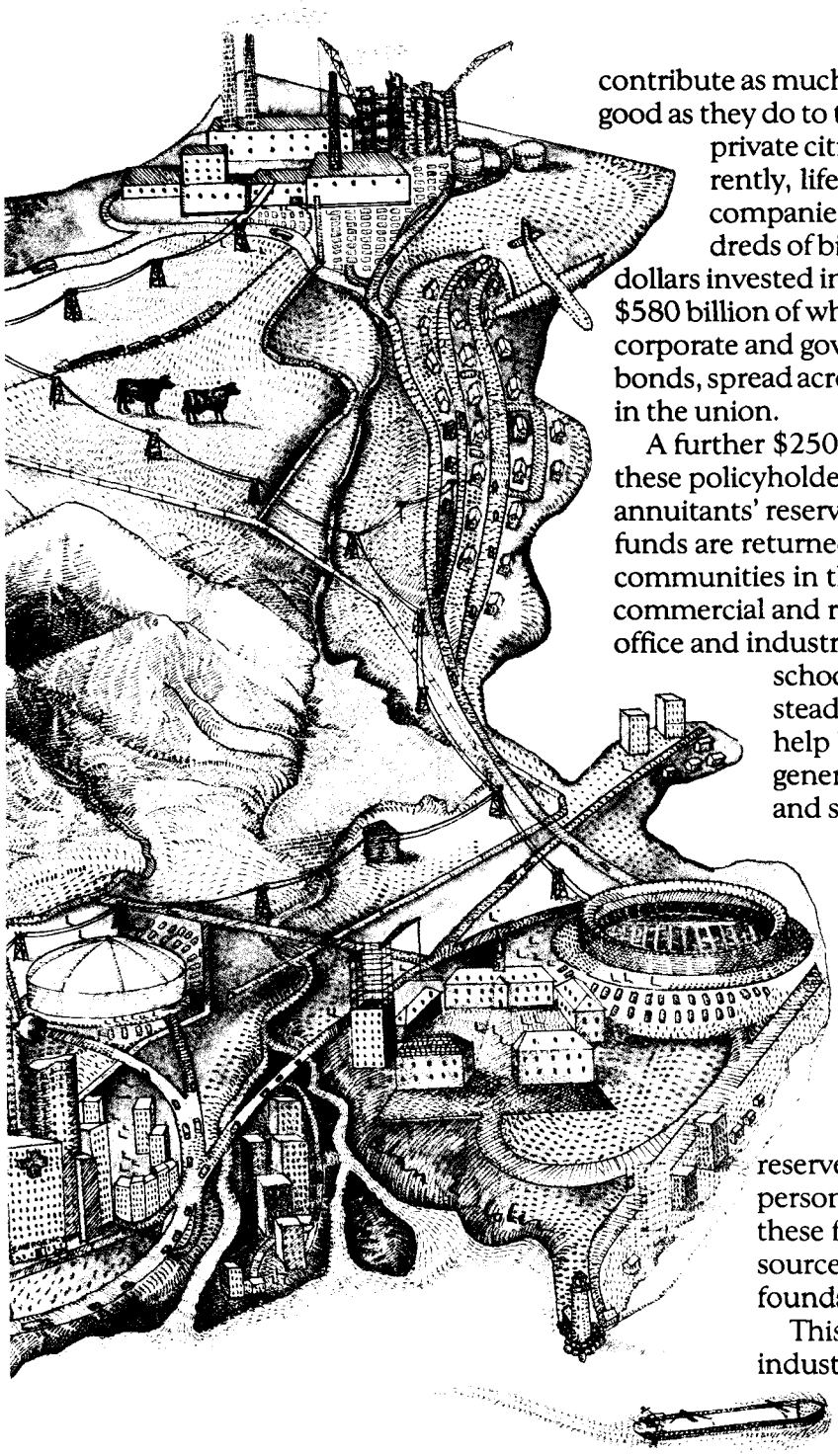
Security Built By Anywhere.



contribute as much to the public good as they do to the security of private citizens. Currently, life insurance companies have hundreds of billions of dollars invested in America, over $580 billion of which is held in corporate and government bonds, spread across every state in the union.

A further $250 billion of these policyholders' and annuitants' reserve funds are returned to communities in the form of commercial and residential mortgages and direct investments for office and industrial buildings, stores, homes, hospitals, and schools. Thus the life insurance industry provides a steady source of funds to modernize America and help keep interest rates reasonable. All of this generates work for builders, laborers, suppliers, and subcontractors.

As you see, every insurance policy has two beneficiaries: the family who buys it, and the nation's economy.

The State of Security benefits not just a few of us, but all of us.

In a time when the U.S. savings rate compares so unfavorably to that of other countries, increases in life insurance and private pension reserves account for over one third of all long-term personal savings in the U.S. Unlike foreign sources, these funds provide a particularly stable and reliable source of long-term capital — capital that serves as a foundation for America's future economic growth.

This constant cycling of funds from families to industry and back to families and their communities makes life insurance America's greatest industry for growth.

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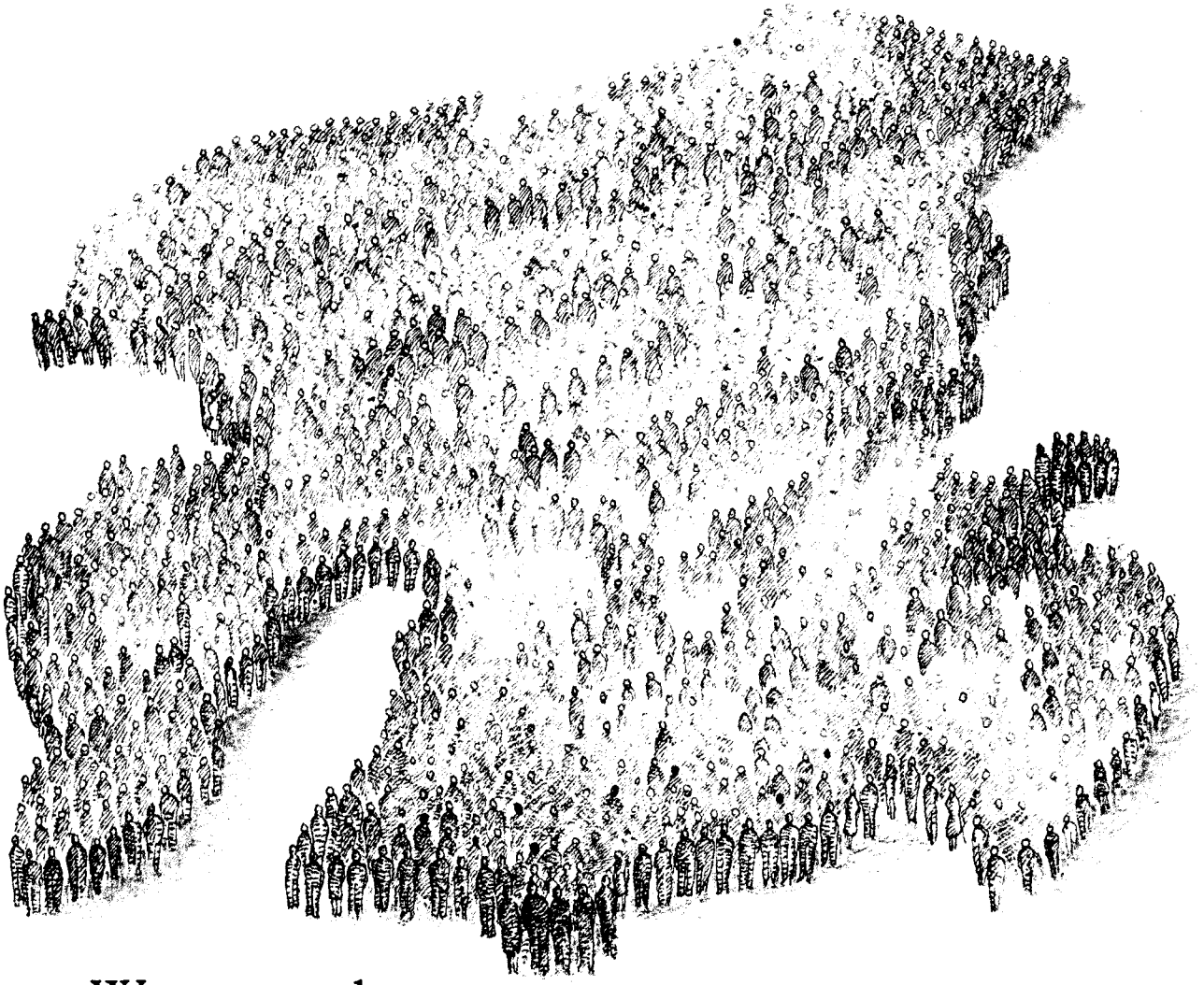

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Yeah: getting the money up front.

It was the longest-running mistake in the history of labor, the unwitting, almost Gandhi-like renunciation of power. It was so stupid, and it was just one of a million blunders along the way. Now the renunciation is complete. Labor is as helpless as an emaciated Hindu.

I could not say all of this, of course, to the Chinese. While I talked, however, they listened politely, showing no sign of emotion. To me, they were as inscrutable as management lawyers.

When I was done, each member of the delegation, almost bowing, made a formal response:

"We found your explanation most enlightening."

"We were, indeed, most enlightened."

"We believe you should come to China and give lectures on this subject." I might as well.

Without the strike, and without stock, what hope is there for labor? We can always hope for the Great Depression. I think many people in labor believe, "Hey, that's when our ship'll really come in." Great. Just what labor needs. A depression. That would kill off whatever was left of us.

Besides, labor disgraced itself in the Great Depression. At least, the old AFL did, and now even the CIO unions act like the old AFL. Incredibly, in the '30s the old AFL actually *opposed* unemployment insurance. But then, labor has always had a funny relationship with the unemployed. Once people become unemployed, even if they were always good union members, they are out of the labor movement. They become lepers, untouchables; they become, at least potentially, scabs.

It is easy to see this now, in the '80s, in the way labor has kept its distance from the plant-closing movement. It is a movement that started outside institutional labor: unemployed workers, community groups, church groups. My friend Ann, who is a radical, said to me recently: "The plant-closing thing is so great. It's exciting, it's grass roots. So why doesn't labor endorse it?" I thought: "Why don't they endorse it? Why don't doctors go to the funerals of their patients?"

Yet I often think the paradigm strike of the '80s is not a strike at all: it is a plant closing. It has all the theater, the anger that used to go into a strike, and it is really the only time when it is safe to throw a brick. People throw bricks, fight cops, disrupt Sunday services in churches and spill blood all over the floor. Nobody can sue or bust the union or do anything to them now: they are beyond the reach of labor law.

The wildest, most dangerous moment of a plant closing is when people realize not only that they will lose their jobs, but that they are about to leave the union, forever. It is their last five minutes in organized labor. Then they will be in the rest of America, the other 83 percent. This is their one last chance to be mad.

Just this year, a local I loved, one of the best in the country, disappeared—Local 72 of the Auto Workers, in Kenosha, Wisconsin, with 5,000 members. The Chrysler plant closed, and so did the local: the earth just swallowed it up. Just before that happened, the union called a rally. The workers stood outside the plant, and not knowing what else to do, they decided to scream. It was a scream so loud it could be heard in the Loop, 60 miles away. So a story said in the *Chicago Sun-Times*. It was a scream that one day people will commemorate with a plaque, and people will walk past it and remember. And they will think: this was the last scream they screamed before they left organized labor.

Ed Sadlowski, my friend, a sub-district director of the Steelworkers, a hero of the Danley strike, puts it this way: "How will labor come back? In a strike. That's not romanticism, that's a fact. It'll start with one plant. One plant. And they strike. And there'll be guys across the street, at a second plant, and they see it, and they think, 'Hmm, maybe we can do that.' And they do it, and they win. Then somebody in Idaho does it, the same thing, independently. And then all of a sudden, you're seeing some John L. Lewis again, a leader, but he's just thrown up, he's just riding the thing . . ."

He kept saying, "That's not romanticism . . ."

But it sounds Tolstoyan: nobody planning it, no Napoleon, not even a John L. Lewis. Maybe it happened this way in the '30s, but if it happens again . . . well, I must say, a million things will have to go right.

I have dwelt on strikes as if there were nothing more to labor, as if it were all war and no peace. When I first became a labor lawyer, it is true, I was in it for the strikes, for the "war." I liked the masculine, even macho side of it. I smoked cigars, I liked all the little pieces of stage business.

But I had to give up cigars because of my sinuses. And to a degree I would never have believed, the labor movement has had to give up strikes.

As I get older, I seem to be with labor now more for the feminine, maternal side of it. I am in it for St. Joseph's Day. I am in it for the side of labor that brings us all together and that wipes away every tear.

I was back at St. Joseph's Day a year or two ago. There had been layoffs at Joe Romano's local, and more were supposed to be coming that week. I sat with one of the men who expected to be laid off any day. As we ate together, he held his little girl, about four years old; she was very quiet, very sad.

I said, "What'll you do?"

His wife shot him a look.

He said, "She doesn't like me to talk about it."

"Maybe it won't happen," she said, and I could see she was afraid.

"Oh," he said, "we'll get by. The union'll help us."

I said, almost sarcastically: "How? Financially?"

"Yes. Oh, they expect you to try, but if you can't make a mortgage payment, the local will do it for you."

I just stared at him. He must be kidding. This local, right now, was down to 150 working members.

Then I thought about Joe Romano, and the faith people had in him; and the faith they had in each other. They had starved together for nine months. Who knows? Maybe this local did make mortgage payments.

As I left, I thanked Joe, as I usually do, and we shook hands.

"Great food," I said.

And he said, "I'm honored you were our guest."

Later I kept repeating these words to myself, as if they were full of mystery, and had a deeper meaning, on the Feast of St. Joseph the Worker. •

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BOOKS & The Arts

Stanley Kauffmann on Films

Political Partying

The British cherish their notorious criminal cases and scandals. The more notorious they are, the more likely to be replayed—not only in nonfiction but in novels, plays, and films. Last year, for instance, we had *White Mischief*, about an aristo sex triangle and murder in Kenya in 1941. Now comes **Scandal** (Miramax), which plumbs, or tries to, the 1963 London brouhaha involving the minister of war, John Profumo, a very available young woman, Christine Keeler, and a fashionable osteopath, Stephen Ward.

Though this scandal was certainly the juiciest in Britain since World War II, it was "fantastically absurd," as Giles Playfair says in *Six Studies in Hypocrisy*. Ward, who moved among the famous, was kinky; one of his kinks was a pleasure in surrounding himself with pretty women of easiest virtue, few of whom he himself slept with but whom he liked to make available to his friends. He was not a pimp: he was a successful physician in no need of money. Apparently he enjoyed dispensing women as an exercise in power and ingratiation. Keeler was one of Ward's cluster; Profumo was a top-class friend whom he wanted to please. At about the same time Ward introduced Keeler to Profumo, he also introduced her to Captain Ivanov of the Soviet Embassy.

This is where the scandal—and the absurdity—came in. Public suspicion grew that Profumo had been blackmailed to betray state secrets to Ivanov through Keeler. A chief absurd element in all this, as Playfair says,

> was the security fantasy itself: a means of obscuring the uncomfortable reality of Britain's dwindling military power by protestations that Britain's military "secrets," far from being of diminishing interest to potentially hostile powers, were more envied and sought after than ever before in history.

A further, greater absurdity was that, by the time the scandal broke in full force, Keeler's acquaintance with both Profumo and Ivanov had ended, and there was no evidence that any state secrets had been passed.

Still, there was too much titillating material here for the story to be left alone. The scandal-mongering had results. Profumo, under pressure to make a statement, lied to the House of Commons, denying any impropriety with Keeler; within two months he had to confess his lie and resign. Harold Macmillan's Conservative government was, let's say, not unhappy that the police pursued Ward, so that authority could seem authoritative—*someone* had to be punished to please the public and Ward seemed the right victim; he was soon indicted on five counts of sexual misconduct (there was no mention of espionage). Ward committed suicide before the jury returned a verdict. He was found guilty on two counts of living on immoral earnings, but apparently it was horror, not guilt, that made him take the barbiturates.

Today the real attraction of this case is political. The Tory government was severely shaken by the storm. The Labour Party, headed by Harold Wilson, tried to make the most of the rumors and allegations. The first point is contextually sketched in the film. The second, possibly because it would distract from the portrait of Tory decadence, is skimped.

Politics is certainly present in *Scandal*, but the heavy emphasis in Michael Thomas's screenplay is on the spicy. It would be irrational to expect filmmakers to scant the sexual matters in this story. Very much is made of the nearly nude nightclub acts in which Keeler was discovered by Ward, the orgies that she attended with him, Profumo's hard-breathing beddings of Keeler, her two West Indian lovers who had a knife fight over her. Mandy Rice-Davies, connected with the case through her friendship with Keeler and Ward, is seen in a trio evening with Keeler and a bar pickup and again as she services the rich man who keeps her.

But to place the gamy matters centrally and the politics as context is to run a risk that *Scandal* doesn't overcome. The shock factor of the sex quickly wears off, and we're left with the antics of wearisome rich thrillseekers and of two lower-class pretty women who cleverly

FILMS WORTH SEEING

Chocolat. *Quiet, implicative beauty in a young Frenchwoman's re-creation of her childhood in Cameroon and her discovery of subsequent changes. (Reviewed 4/17/89)* **Lawrence of Arabia.** *An unusual double strength. It's both a wonderful "movie movie" and a fine work of art. Not to be missed or forgotten. (2/20/89)* **Major League.** *Funny, exciting, fictitious. The Cleveland Indians, suffering from a malevolent owner, decide that the best way to revenge themselves is to win the pennant. Do they? Enjoy finding out. (5/8/89)* **Little Vera.** *The candid revelations about Soviet living conditions and the malaise of the young don't obscure the quality of the acting and directing. Natalya Negoda, the Vera, is winning. (5/1/89)* **—SK**

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use the favor of the powerful but who are in themselves mightily unfascinating.

Michael Caton-Jones directed feverishly with everything he has seen in post-Fellini filmmaking. He does his best to lick stockinged thighs with the camera, to establish fleshy male faces with half-smoked cigars in them as a sigret of the times. So wryly casual is the sex-selling, so porcine the buyers, that more than once we think of George Grosz's Berlin. But none of Caton-Jones's busy picture-making can cure the basic defect: the people are not interesting. If the script's emphasis had been reversed, if Ward and Keeler were seen throughout as pawns in a political game, with their feverish rabbitings surrounded by hardheaded political opportunism, they might have been made, if not interesting, at least pathetic. As is, even Ward's suicide is not moving because he hasn't struck much of a chord of sympathy.

This despite the fact that one of the best contemporary English actors, John Hurt, plays the part. His extraordinary sensibility, his excellent actor's voice have been important in, among others, *The Elephant Man*, *1984*, and (coincidence) *White Mischief*. Here he is wasted on an unresponsive role; worse, he seems not quite right for Ward, too much of Hamlet in a ranker Noël Coward character. Keeler is played by Joanne Whalley—now Whalley-Kilmer since her marriage—who is beautiful and gifted. She proved it opposite Anthony Hopkins in *The Good Father* and again as the nurse in the TV series *The Singing Detective*. But, as written, Keeler is a trifling, giddy, occasionally sentimental girl whose company doesn't wear well.

Bridget Fonda, complete with cockney accent, is Mandy Rice-Davies and gets as much as she can out of the one note provided, her amusement at the sweaty goings-on in which she participates. Profumo, as written, could have been played by any one of 50 English actors. Ian McKellen's talents are wasted.

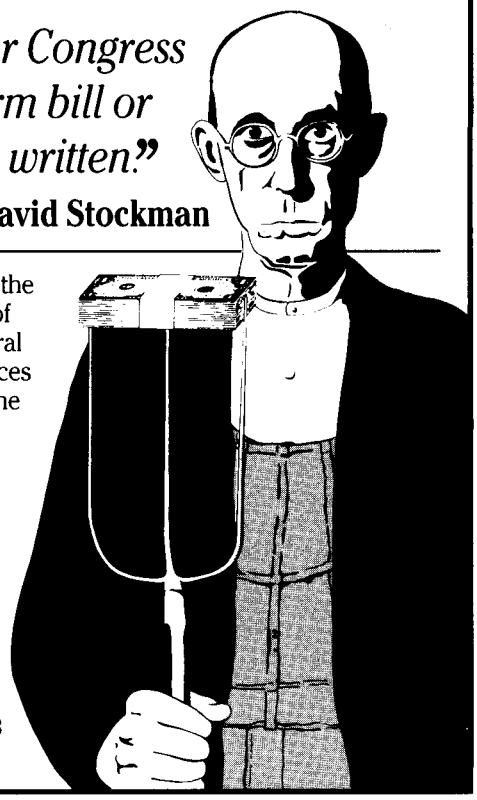
A social note. One of the subtlest ways in which Caton-Jones sets the picture in the past is by the amount of smoking that the characters do. No one smokes that much now in British and American films. Incessant cigarettes date the film better than the music does.

A personal note. I particularly admired Daniel Massey's performance as Mervyn Griffith-Jones, the prosecutor in Ward's trial. Nine years earlier Griffith-Jones had prosecuted, unsuccessfully, a London publisher for publishing a novel of mine that was allegedly obscene. I relished the nastiness that Massey gave the role. •

The High Cost of Farm Welfare

"Required reading for Congress before the next farm bill or budget resolution is written."

—David Stockman



Few people have been helped by the massive farm subsidy programs of the past 50 years, charges agricultural economist Clifton B. Luttrell. He traces the history of farm programs from the early price support schemes to the massive New Deal and postwar programs, then provides a comprehensive analysis of modern programs. Farm programs, he concludes, "tax the poor to enrich the wealthy." $19.95 cloth/$9.95 paper/149 pp. Available at bookstores or from:

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Robert Brustein on Theater

Anything You Do Too Damned Long

The trouble with Willy Russell's **Shirley Valentine** (Booth Theatre) begins when the lights go up on Pauline Collins, sitting at a kitchen table with a glass of red wine in her hand, talking to us about her unfulfilled life. Collins, in a tour de force of acting that earned her the Olivier prize in London, will not be joined by anyone on stage: *Shirley Valentine* is a one-person show. But as this 42-year-old English housewife pours out her intimate marital and sexual secrets over the course of a two-and-a-half hour evening, we are left uncertain about just how to react to her unsolicited revelations. The audience is the uncredited cast member in every production, but in order to fill a role correctly, even a spectator needs to know what character he's playing. Russell (who gave us *Educating Rita*) is no help here—though perhaps he will write a better part for the invisible auditor in the movie version. His failure to tell us who we are, why we should be listening, or how we ought to respond lends Shirley's long-winded suburban soliloquies an air of factitious inauthenticity.

They also seem excessively familiar. Russell is the latest male author to board the feminist bandwagon. Is it possible he's jumped on too late? His *Shirley Valentine* was written over 100 years after *A Doll's House*; yet Ibsen still manages to be the fresher playwright. Russell's Torvald, an unseen husband named Joe, doesn't share his wife's appetite for the finer things in life (like wine—"He says it's a posh way of getting pissed"), and he doesn't do much for Shirley sexually either. Anyway, she finds sex overrated—like Safeways: "All that pushing and shoving and you come out with very little at the end." (The play is teeming with such analogical one-liners—the discovery of the clitoris, for example, is compared to "penicillin and America . . . I mean it was always there").

Clearly, Shirley is ripe for reawakening, and when she takes advantage of a free trip to a Greek island, she is sensitized both to Sex and to Nature. Her Lawrentian lover materializes in the shape of a taverna waiter ("We discovered it—the isle of Clitoris"). Like Hemingway's Maria, she gets to feel the earth tremble ("point nine on the Richter scale"), and like Thornton Wilder's Emily, she gets the chance to realize that she has failed to appreciate each and every moment of existence ("Why do we get all this life if we don't ever use it?"). No wonder sex wasn't doing much for her—she was too busy reading the Great Books. At the end, Joe is coming to fetch her, eager to forgive, but she's no longer just a wife and mother—why, she's Nora Helmer, uh, make that Shirley Valentine.

A major difference between Russell's heroine and Ibsen's is that Nora's self-discovery was limited to a long fourth-act speech while Shirley's verbose confessions go on throughout the entire play. We may be reaching the breaking point with this endless female self-absorption. Feminists should start monitoring it; plays like this have the potential to scuttle the movement. After two-and-a-half interminable hours of consciousness-raising, all that is raised are hackles, and even the most sympathetic males may start crunching beer cans or pumping iron. Collins, ensconced in her suburban kitchen or sitting on Greek rocks, is a warm, affectionate actress. She performs the author's monologue with humor and charm, relaxing her features after punch lines with a pleased distant smile. It wasn't her fault the play reminded me of that passage in *The Snows of Kilimanjaro* where the hero defines boredom as "anything you do too damned long."

Psychological longueurs can afflict even the most adroit presentations on Broadway, including the rousing **Black and Blue** at the Minskoff and the dazzling *Largely New York* at the St. James. The former is a bookless concert that features some great big band music, most of it based on Duke Ellington numbers; some wonderful singing by three hefty blues queens, Ruth Brown, Linda Hopkins, and Carrie Smith; and some brilliant tap dancing, particularly by Bunny Briggs, whose crackling feet sound like rain on the roof. Yet, despite the gorgeous sequin costuming and imaginative use of lights, platforms, and velvets, the concert is so extended that you may start tapping your foot in rhythmic accompaniment and end in arrhythmic impatience. *Black and Blue* either needs a script or a dance floor or the aisles of the Apollo. You can only sit admiring the performers for so long before you want to participate in the show.

Bill Irwin's **Largely New York** establishes him as America's most endearing modern clown. Some of the techniques in the show are recognizable from its dry run on television, *Not Quite/New York* (the video experimentation), and his first stage piece, *The Regard of Flight*. But even when the conception seems familiar, the execution is fresh and efficient. Without any loss of originality, Irwin has the ability to remind you of all the immortals. He has the choreographic skill of Charlie Chaplin, the awkwardness of Jacques Tati, the hangdog moroseness of Buster Keaton, the collegiate innocence of Harold Lloyd, the mimetic grace of Marceau and Barrault, the anarchy of Harpo Marx, the self-denigrating embarrassment of Stan Laurel. Yet he still manages to establish his own persona of innocence and sweetness and cherubic wholesomeness. Dressed in baggy pants, white shirt, vest, bow tie, owlish glasses, and bruised top hat, and brandishing a white cane, Irwin comes on like a figure who both controls his environment and is controlled by it, alternately bemused and befuddled by his relationship to complicated objects—a high-tech clown under a technological big top.

Irwin's main prop in *Largely New York* is a remote control. Initially, he uses this device to raise the curtain and to part a series of red and black travelers. Delighted by his newfound power, he runs around the stage, carefully folds his coat, changes hats, turns the remote on the lights and the music, and begins a simple dance to the organ accompaniment of "Tea for Two." Of course, he is not even remotely in control, and when he rattles the obstinate device impatiently, the lights change, the curtain falls down, chaos reigns.

Irwin's comfortable "Tea for Two" world is challenged first by two figures from the counterculture—a hippie Latino and a tall black man with a flat-top haircut, carrying a noisy boom box—then by an aloof ballerina in a pink leotard who provides the love interest, and then by an entire troupe of robotic modern dancers. Irwin's efforts to adapt himself to these intrusions force him into calisthenic contortions, but his major antagonists are a dozen professorial figures in academic robes, one of whom keeps falling headlong into the orchestra pit.

Irwin is what Eugene Ionesco called a "resistentialist"—malfunctioning things are always conspiring against him. At one point, he is pulled under the curtain by an invisible force, after which the cur-

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tain hauls him up into the wings and drops him rudely on the floor. Playing with a video camera, he turns it on the dancers, on the audience, on himself. When he zooms in on his face, his TV nose hits the screen of the monitor—his video self is seriously out of sync with his live personality. He becomes trapped inside the television set, and is rescued only after having been sucked up by a vacuum cleaner and deposited in his trunk.

Irwin seems to be fascinated with video's relationship to stage reality. Using a variation of the Marx Brothers' mirror trick in *Duck Soup*, he simulates his own television image, mystifying the audience as to what, exactly, is live and what is taped. For as well as being a clown, Irwin is something of a magician, playing with levels of illusion and reality in the manner of a Pirandello. For a climax, he has all the academics materialize on the TV monitor, then suctions them into the trunk, and finally makes one of them disappear into a briefcase.

At the end, everyone in the cast is dancing to "Tea for Two"—whether modern dancing, break dancing, or tap dancing—and everyone except Irwin has managed to fall, or be pushed, into the orchestra pit. Waving for silence at the curtain call as if to speak to the audience for the first time, Irwin falls into the pit as well. He has kept the vow of silence sworn by all the great silent clowns of the past, yet somehow adapted their classic art to modern urban life.

Irwin's achievement in *Largely New York* inspires considerable awe and reverence, so I've been trying to figure out why this brief 70-minute evening seems about 20 minutes too long. The difficulty, I think, is that no matter how brilliant each sequence is in isolation, in aggregate *Largely New York*, like all of Irwin's work thus far, seems more like a technical stunt than an integrated work of art. The mimes and clowns and harlequins who have fed Irwin's inspiration all put their expertise at the service of a greater vision—a powerful story, a mimetic narrative, a comic odyssey, a farcical scenario. Irwin manages to create an entirely winsome and appealing persona, but this persona now exists primarily to display the sources of its own virtuosity.

Self-regarding rather than exteriorly focused, *Largely New York* is more an act than a theater piece, and, traditionally, acts are of limited duration. Bill Irwin has demonstrated that he can be a superb performer of written text—his Lucky in Lincoln Center's *Waiting for Godot*, for example, was the most fully inhabited character in the production. But

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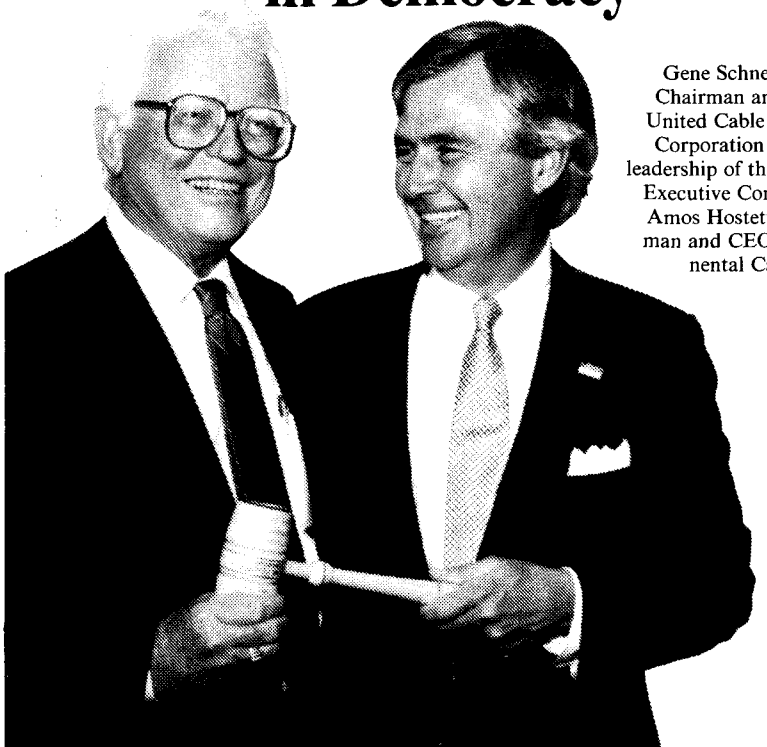

Gene Schneider (left), Chairman and CEO of United Cable Television Corporation passes the leadership of the C-SPAN Executive Committee to Amos Hostetter, Chairman and CEO of Continental Cablevision.

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his own creations are largely jeux d'esprit that dazzle with invention, yet leave one hungry for more substantial nourishment. It would be easy to say that Irwin has talent without genius were he not considerably endowed with both. It is a question, rather, of failing to put talent and genius in service to something larger than their own self-demonstration.

Party of Animals

BY JAMES WOLCOTT

The Temple of My Familiar by Alice Walker

(Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 432 pp., $19.95)

Cover to cover, Alice Walker's *The Temple of My Familiar* is the nuttiest novel I've ever read. (And I read *Ancient Evenings*.) Helpful, talky, *The Temple of My Familiar* subordinates fictional interest—character, plot, atmosphere; stuff like that—in order to function as a workshop. It's many workshops in one.

A civics workshop. "I realize . . . that there is not a single government in the world I like or trust. They are all, as far as I'm concerned, unnatural bodies, male-supremacist private clubs."

A Middle East workshop. " 'I shudder to think what Hitler's childhood was like,' she said. 'But anyone can see that the Palestinians and their children are reliving it under the Israelis today.' "

An our-friends-the-animals workshop. "The animals can remember; for, like sight, memory is renewed at every birth. But our language they will never speak; not from lack of intelligence, but from the different construction of their speaking apparatus."

An our-friends-the-trees workshop.

> "I'm learning carpentry now, myself," says Suwelo. "Though there the question is how does the carpenter relate to the worldwide exploitation, slaughter, and waste of trees."
>
> "What do you mean?" asks Carlotta.
>
> "Well, wood comes from trees. Trees are alive. They have a purpose separate from becoming houseboats, firewood, and decks."

A my-body-myself workshop.

> And then, the women in her consciousness-raising group had taught her how to masturbate. Suddenly she'd found herself free. Sexually free, for the first time in her life. At the same time, she was learning to meditate, and was throwing off the last clinging vestiges of organized religion. She was soon meditating and masturbating and finding herself dissolved into the cosmic All. Delicious.

And—could everyone please be seated? people, *please*—a wardrobe workshop.

> I watched my mother magically create garments in that particular shade of blue, which she eventually dubbed "Power Blue."
>
> I was fascinated by her. . . . By the way she invariably wore pants, even to church. But pants so subtle only other women noticed they were pants.

Baby, when you wear those subtle Power Blue pantsuits, my bad James Brown self breaks out in a (song cue!) "Cold Sweat."

The Temple of My Familiar could use a little James Brown backbeat, a soulful bit of butt-funk to stir the dead air droning from the workshops. But Walker's book is New Age in its non-stop om toward oneness. In her earlier novels (the most famous being, of course, *The Color Purple*), Walker was a storyteller with a message; *The Temple of My Familiar* finds her an oracle with a mission. Her characters are merely mouths at the workshop mikes. She uses the squelch knob on her sound board to maintain a level tone. Take Arveyda, for example. A Jimi Hendrix voodoo chile festooned in headband, cape, and feathers, Arveyda makes women weep and moan with his guitar and flute. But his music is a tamer call to communion than the mortar barrage and air raid siren unleashed by Hendrix's amps. No cock-rock pagan, Arveyda is "a deeply spiritual person" who plays "softly and prayerfully." The angels dote on every suspended note. Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the Power Blue pantsuits.

It's the women who wear most of the power pants in *The Temple of My Familiar*. The Force is with them. Unlike men, women are centered. Precivilization prospered when women straddled their curve of the planet. Via a long monologue by Arveyda's mother-in-law, Zede, Walker transports us back to our matriarchal beginnings, to that matriarchal Eden so dear to mystical feminists. Back then man was not the measure. Man mirrored woman. A man's penis was simply an "elongated clitoris," dangling without significance. Man's prowess on the hunt was also a paltry show. "The men . . . were better hunters than the women, but only because the women had found they could live quite well on foods other than meat. . . ." Like all green idylls, this one was doomed to spoil. The meat went to the men's heads. They began to mutter. To seethe. To scheme. Zede suggests that the real reason men rebelled was that women laughed at them for lacking dress sense. "The finery the women wore seemed to prove their supernaturalness. The men, lacking the centuries of clothing and adornment experience of the women, were able to make only the clumsiest imitations."

How mortifying it must have been, to strut into the village square in your sharpest-looking pelt, acting, *feeling* good, only to hear snickers from every corner of the bazaar. What a bringdown! Small wonder the menfolk got testy. "The men grew sick of the women they worshiped. And by now they had made an important discovery about women's ability to produce life. That discovery was—and it had been kept well hidden by woman for a very long time—that the life that woman produced came out of a hole at her bottom!" To copy this capacity for childbearing, some men begin chopping off their penises, "trying to fashion a hole through which life could come." These guys really didn't have a *clue*.

Not that modern men are any more attuned. White men in Alice Walker's writing are mostly offstage, waging war, ruining economies, bleeding nature. It's the black man who carries the oppression indoors. In *The Color Purple*, Mister has booze on his breath and a hostile hard-on beneath his overalls. For the wives and daughters of such misters, rape and incest walk the wooden planks of their shacks. Walker has been accused of being opportunistic in her slam-dunk of black men. In his hilarious, rampaging satire *Reckless Eyeballing*, Ishmael Reed (without naming names) suggests that black feminists such as Walker, Nzotake Shange, and Michelle Wallace are sellout stooges for their white sisters, cashing in on society's fear of the black man. By melodramatizing the dark side of Mister moon, Walker is able to titillate and wow a crossover audience of white readers wanting to think the worst of black men. Reed claims that the black feminist (who is often a middle-class softie trying to act African-militant) makes a phony show of her scarred hide to say

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what a white feminist would find too impolitic to say—namely, that the black man is part of the problem rather than the solution, more oppressor than oppressed. In other words, Alice Walker is taking in Gloria Steinem's dirty laundry.

The thesis isn't all paranoia. Alice Walker and Gloria Steinem *are* friends, and white women *do* make up the bulk of the book-buying public. Walker sells loads more books trashing black men than John Edgar Wideman does dramatizing their plight. One sure sign of how few friends the average black man has in our culture is that TV (usually so shy of offending minority sensibilities) has boarded this bandwagon. The miniseries *The Women of Brewster Place*, starring Oprah Winfrey, celebrated the enduring strength and solidarity of black women by reducing black men to no-good ghetto trash. Yet black male authors can't come on all so miffed and innocent at this turn of events. There *is* a savage streak of misogyny in large stretches of their writing, from the rape exploits of Eldridge Cleaver in *Soul on Ice* to the barely suppressed cry of "bitch" in even Ishmael Reed's best work, not to mention the pimp chronicles of Iceberg Slim. Black women can back up their right to glare.

Without trying to be accommodating, Walker lowers the glare in *The Temple of My Familiar*, engaging the black man/black woman problem non-confrontationally, through talk therapy. ("Talking," says one character, "is the very *afro*-disiac of love.") Gone is the fearmongering of *The Color Purple*. The black men may be simple meatloaf compared with the women, but they aren't menacing; they're left behind and ineffectual, even sheepish about their shortcomings. "His generation of men had failed women—and themselves, he mused, taking off his tortoiseshell glasses and stroking the ridge of his generous and somewhat shiny nose."

The sheepish owner of that shiny nose is Suwelo, a black historian who Toms in his profession, teaching history as the record of "What a few white men wanted, thought, and did." Suwelo isn't a total Tom. He takes a pathetic sneaky pride in pencilling in a few black men's names on the scorecard of this Caucasian all-star team. Men's names, because women don't rank on his roster. He doesn't even read women writers, white or black. In his complacent myopia, Suwelo is a stand-in for those black male writers Walker chastised in her essay collection *In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens* for dissing their black sisters. In your face, Ishmael Reed: "Though black women have religiously read every black male writer that came down the pike (usually presenting black females as witches and warlocks), few black men have thought it of any interest at all to read black women. As far as they're concerned, they have the whole picture."

DRAWING BY VINT LAWRENCE FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

One of this novel's workshop tasks is to re-educate Suwelo and by extension all black men who think they have the whole picture. First, Suwelo's sense of history is humbled (he's informed that Kalahari Bushmen have as rightful a place in the big parade as the great white fathers), then his sexual pride is shot down (he's accused of trying to colonize his partner's orgasms with his simpering cock). He learns to bend. He learns to extend. "Here's my hand in struggle-hood," he says to a black woman named Fanny. "Let's shake on it." Suwelo grows as a person, but his growth is entirely on Walker's terms—he comes around to her way of thinking. The book tutors him and in tutoring him becomes tedious.

No such tutoring is needed for Arveyda, the New Age avatar who knows that woman is of herself entire. One night after a concert he sees a woman sporting a T-shirt that reads "A Woman without a Man Is like a Fish without a Bicycle." That tired old line!—if I had a dime for every time the black feminist Flo Kennedy has croaked it over the years, I could buy that pair of Power Blue pants I've been eyeing. But because Arveyda is secure with himself, man enough to be a woman, he's rewarded with the novel's showcase prize of penetration. He and Fanny fuse, she on top. (He's no colonizer.) Predictably, their happiness is a cosmic happening:

> Fanny feels as if the glow of a candle that warms but could never burn has melted her, and she drips onto Arveyda.
>
> Arveyda feels as if he has rushed to meet all the ancestors and they have welcomed him with joy.
>
> It is amazing to them how quickly—like a long kiss—they both come.
>
> She is fearful of asking him what she must. Timidly she says: "And did you also see the yellow plum tree and all the little creatures, even the fish, in its branches? And did you see and feel the ocean and the sun?"
>
> But Arveyda says simply, "Yes. And the moon as it moves over the ocean, and the lilacs, and mountain ranges, and all the colors of valleys."

Were his seed to anoint her egg, the result would be the starchild from 2001. Only, this time, black.

All this starshine doesn't obscure Walker's long-term political agenda. Her conception of multiethnic society is an Indian corncob with white, black, red, and yellow arrayed side by side like kernels. (Ideally, the cob is then used to cornhole capitalism.) But sometimes the kernels have their own ideas, and being a hard-line radical means having to sweat out the deviations. Revolution is a per-

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manent workshop. To wit: in the 1970s Walker visited Cuba as a fan of Fidel and his revolution (a visit she documents in *Mothers' Gardens*). For her Fidel rode the freedom train, a fit comrade and companion of Nat Turner, Harriet Tubman, Sojourner Truth, Malcolm X, and Martin Luther King Jr. One thing bugged her about Cuba, however:

> I was disturbed by the Cuban use of make-up (the first heavily made-up woman I noticed was a curvaceous young soldier in army fatigues who also had her hair in curlers) and have still to resolve my own feelings about, for example, a revolutionary woman who dyes her hair blond—as Hydee Santamaria (who was with the rebels at the Moncada Barracks as well as in the Sierra Maestra) did for several years—or who otherwise (through hair straighteners and whatnot) endeavors to look like someone other than herself.

After all, "Fidel, one notices, has not tampered with *his* looks or style of dress." He still puffs out his chest in Power Khaki.

The Temple of My Familiar is an attempt to mindbend the stubborn vanities of human nature (those hair curlers) by intoning an earthmother mantra. Like that masturbation workshop, Walker's book seeks to dissolve personal/political tensions in the cosmic All. Etherealizing to the nth degree in her novel, Walker constructs a cosmology that unthrones the male order. Zede's monologue about matriarchal Eden is more than a matter of auld lang syne. It serves to build the basis of Walker's mythos, to truly locate our mothers' gardens. The geographical center of this mythos is Mother Africa, its moral and spiritual center the black African woman.

Mother Africa's kharmic ambassadress in *The Temple of My Familiar* is Lissie, a woman whose past lives are as thick as a pack of cards. In all of those incarnations, she has never changed sex or hue. "I have always been a black woman." In her restless odyssey the quintessence of black womanhood rejoices to the glory not of—well, certainly not that old fraud, God. God Himself has been unthroned in this grand scenario. The mother of Mother Africa is "the Great Mother, Creator of All, Protector of All, the Keeper of the Earth. *The* Goddess." The Goddess is nothing less than the immortal face of feminism. In the late 20th century, lesbians are Her light brigade:

> "Lesbians were all around us, you know," said Suwelo, in a tone of facing up to the ultimate challenge. "Beautiful, beautiful women, quite a lot of them, though some of them didn't look so hot. Just seeing them on their outings together, climbing the hills, sunning in the parks, eating noisily at the largest tables in restaurants in Berkeley, made you want to cry. They'd *left* us! Hell, these bitches were so tough, they'd left *God*! This was when they were just discovering the Goddess, and it was all the time Goddess this and Goddess that. I once asked a black woman on the street where the new bus stop was . . . and she just looked at me, shrugged, and said an easy 'Goddess knows.' It blew me away."

Just so we know which part of Suwelo was blown away, Walker plants a clue. "Miss Lissie handed Suwelo a knife and a tube of the sausage. He whacked off a penis length."

If *The Temple of My Familiar* undulated, it would be a hootchie-cootchie dance to castration. It's too high-minded for that. Pantheistic plea, lesbian propaganda, past-lives chronicle, black-pride panorama, *The Temple of My Familiar* doesn't really gel at any junction. Its counterculturalism is too dreamy-floaty to connect with the crackhead immediacies of the times. Not that Alice Walker doesn't have as much right as Swedenborg or Blake to construct a cosmology. If she wishes to indulge in pantheism (she has confessed to being a tree-hugger), that's her prerogative too. The catch is that *her* cosmology doesn't transcend the self but reeks of ineffable egotism. Walker carries on in *The Temple of My Familiar* as if she were Mother Africa's flower-power favorite. Her hippie prose is a form of handicrafts, tie-dyed and dated.

Walker is herself a hippie artifact. In a credit note at the end of *The Temple of My Familiar*, she writes, "I thank the Universe for my participation in Existence. It is a pleasure to have always been present." Like Lissie, Walker is her own astral projection. The drumbeat of her Word reaches beyond barriers of race, sex, time, space, and species. Asked by *USA Weekend* about the reactions to her books, Walker replied, "The ancestors were really happy with *The Color Purple*. The animals are pleased with *The Temple of My Familiar*," and at the end of the invitation to the New York publication party for *The Temple of My Familiar* is the request: "Please come in the spirit of the animal who is your twin." A party of animals! But animals don't buy a lot of books, and the first printing of *Temple* is 175,000 copies. (Which means a lot fewer trees to hug.) Oh, well, back to the Ouija board.

JAMES WOLCOTT writes regularly for *Vanity Fair*.

Circe's Children

BY JOHN HOLLANDER

Fifty Fables of La Fontaine
translated by Norman R. Shapiro
(University of Illinois Press, 119 pp., $29.95)

The Complete Fables of Jean de la Fontaine
edited, with a rhymed verse translation, by Norman B. Spector
(Northwestern University Press, 713 pp., $42.95)

Circe, the first satirist, turned men into the animals they "really" were; she made Odysseus's sailors into pigs, and Odysseus himself, but for the intervention of Hermes, into a fox, or so Hawthorne suggested. Thus she invented one mode in which moral indignation has operated ever since: distorting the physical representation of people and their attributes in order to render their usually hidden moral nature. She also thereby inspired the art of the animal fabulist, and so she was, in a sense, the Muse of Aesop. Anecdotal stories of animals endowed with human speech who seem, by virtue of the traces of Circe's magic, to represent human qualities go back as far as Hesiod and Archilochus in early Greek poetry. We associate such stories with the name of Aesop, a slave who probably lived on Samos in the sixth century B.C. In fact, "Aesop" designates the canonical author of fables written down only later by others, much like "Moses" or "Homer."

The Greek word for "fable" (from the Latin *fabula*) is the familiar *mythos*, although what we generally describe as Greek mythology refers to the cycles of stories about gods and heroes. Theon, a rhetorician of the second century A.D., defined fable as *logos pseudês eikonidzôn alêtheian*, "a false story picturing the

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truth," the story being anything from a telling metaphor to a long narration. (This seems remarkably unspecific to us, given that this is what we mean by parable, or proverb, or even poetry generally.) The Aesopian stories, whether strictly about animals or other sorts of parable or allegory, were in prose. But versifying them was, it appears, an early practice. Plato in the *Phaedo* tells us that Socrates, in prison awaiting the execution of his sentence, not only propounded an Aesopian fable of his own (about how God, unable to reconcile the continual strife of pleasure and pain, fastened their heads together, and so when one of them comes, the other follows), but also took some fables of Aesop that he knew and turned them into verse.

So it is not surprising that the earliest Aesopian fables we have are in verse. Horace, for example, has a speaker in one of his satires tell the familiar story of the country mouse and the city mouse. Versified collections in Latin by Phaedrus in the early first century A.D., and in Greek, by Babrius, slightly later, were themselves imitated and paraphrased in prose and verse, and in that form known in various collections during the Middle Ages. Chaucer tells and retells fables; and an elaborate version of one of them, in the "Nun's Priest's Tale," is one of the world's masterpieces of comic vision. The Aesopian fable of the stomach and the limbs is retold with powerful political consequences by Menenius in Plutarch's life of Coriolanus and, more profoundly and fully, in Shakespeare's play; and there are Aesopian fables, whether specifically of the animal sort or not, in much Renaissance poetry.

But just as the Greek myths were transformed, juxtaposed, intertwined, and brought to an amazing life of meaning and feeling by Ovid, so the fables were totally transformed for us by Jean de la Fontaine. His great collection of some 250 fables in 12 books was published in three parts: the first six books in 1668, five more in 1678, and a 12th volume in 1694, the year before he died. This rounded out an epical enterprise (there were 12 books in Virgil's *Aeneid*) that is half-signaled in the opening line of La Fontaine's dedicatory poem to the Dauphin: "*Je chante les héros dont Esope est le père*," "I sing the heroes whose father is Aesop." (La Fontaine's gifts as a neoclassical poet are apparent in his lovely poem *Adonis*, about which Valéry wrote a fine and central essay. He also invented the intriguing form of the *rondeau redoublé*, a mode that spins refrains out of its first quatrain.)

La Fontaine's collection contains fables of a variety of types drawn from a variety of sources (including those of the Indian fabulist Bidpai). Perhaps the ones most familiar to English-speaking readers are the animal fables often retold in other forms, or the ones that became proverbial in themselves (the "sour grapes" of *Le Renard et les Raisins*), or those that used to be memorized at school when most educated people learned French (*Maître Corbeau, sur arbre perché, / Tenait en son bec un fromage. . . .*).

But there are many other sorts as well. There are etiological fables like the one that Socrates proposed about pleasure and pain (*L'Amour et la Folie* is a splendid one of these), or poems of wittily revisionary mythography (such as the one about what happened to the Goddess Discord after the Homeric fable got through with her) that are rooted in traditions of Renaissance poetry. Stories of that sort contain their own moralizations, and require no "application," as a concluding "moral" or interpretation was called in medieval storytelling.

It is in the beast fables that La Fontaine's moral and poetic thought interfuse in another way. We cannot be sure, when we are offered a story about an ant and a grasshopper, for example, what the theme is going to be. Could it be a fable of the imagination: the grasshopper taking great leaps like a sort of insect Pegasus, while the drudging life of the

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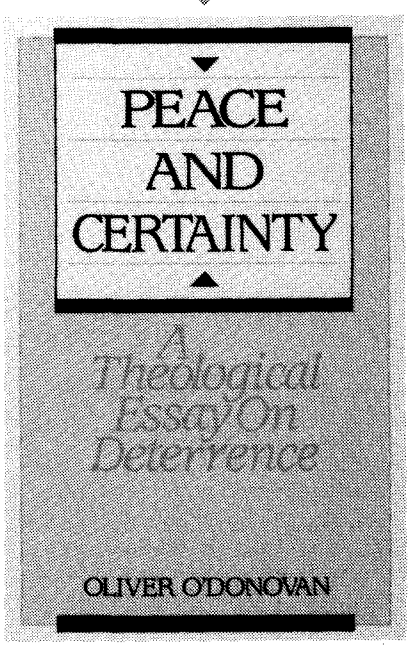

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ant permits it to be conscious of nothing more in the world than its burden, its task, its duty? That would be the grasshopper's story. (If *cigale* is more accurately translated as "cicada," then it's a matter of singing, or fiddling, rather than jumping.) But it is with the prudence of the ant that the Aesopian tradition has always sided, and that has the last word.

It is only through the creatures' discourse—by means of the relation between the arguments they offer and their habits, natures, and interests in the matter at hand—that the moral is deployed. La Fontaine carries this much further than previous fabulists had ever done, for discourse is the substance of his animal world. "Natural" characteristics (Circean, as opposed to zoological, ones) play a good part in La Fontaine's world. Foxes are foxy, cats never come off as much more than con men, and so on.

The fictional power of these fables derives from two paradoxically opposed elements: a kind of "realism" for which the poet is celebrated (his animals are variously peasants, bourgeois, nobility, rather than emblematic or heraldic creatures), and, on the other hand, the mythical matter of there being any discourse at all. In the epilogue to Book 11, the poet acknowledges the power of his own fiction by insisting, with a significant rhyme on "*vers/univers*," on two senses of "creation":

> Car tout parle dans l'univers;
> Il n'est rien qui n'ait son langage:
> Plus éloquents chez eux qu'ils ne sont dans mes vers,
> Si ceux que j'introduis me trouvent peu fidèle,
> Si mon oeuvre n'est pas assez mon modèle,
> J'ai du moins ouvert le chemin . . .
>
> [For everything speaks throughout creation / nothing is without its language; / if, more eloquent at home than in my lines, / those I present find me less than true to them / if my work isn't a good enough model, / I've at least opened up a way.]

But by "nothing is without its language," he does not mean what a naturalist would. As a poet, rather, he can make creatures say anything believably, and thus make moral discourse itself believable. As Francis Duke has put it so well, "La Fontaine is exquisitely aware of the relation of the speech of animals to the metaphor of the animal as man, whose proudest attribute is speech with words." (I recall here the modern schoolboy's joke about a horse and a cow engaged in a contentious argument. When a little dog that has been listening in silence suddenly intrudes, horse and cow, shocked, say at once, "Look! A talking dog!")

That the animals talk so well, and so humanly, runs along in counterpoint to the general Circean moral of all fabling: that people have animal natures usually hidden by language, custom, society. These two notions entwined together furnish the basis of La Fontaine's poetic world. His writing elaborates on this, whether in the language of dialogue among the creatures, in the wonderfully flexible modes of narration, or in the whole range of tones that he adopts in his prefaced or appended moral applications—frequently these have as much archness, plainness, high diction, or casual wisdom as any of his animals, the "*acteurs de mon ouvrage*," as he calls them.

La Fontaine's morals are not easily classifiable intellectually. His stories take Stoic or Epicurean positions in turn. They speak variously for ants and grasshoppers. He is of the age of Molière rather than Voltaire. His pragmatic naturalism and strongly anti-Cartesian views are accompanied by a clearly manifested love of narrative and of his own characters, who create themselves through spoken language rather than, for the most part, by etiological myth.

Philostratus, in the third century A.D., in one of his *eikones* or descriptions of imaginary pictures, shows the Fables gathering "around Aesop, being fond of him because he devotes himself to them. . . . And Aesop, methinks, is weaving some fable; at any rate his smile and his eyes fixed on the ground indicate this." This looks a little like La Fontaine, with his eyes fixed on his page and his ear attuned to the harmonies of human speech in all its variety, to the immense resources of formal verse. Indeed, this seems more appropriate as an image of the spirit of the fabulist than the fantastic labyrinth built at Versailles in 1677, containing 39 remarkable hydraulic statuary groups of Aesopian fables, in which jets of water spurted or spewed from the mouth of each animal in a representation of speech. (The operating costs of the machinery for pumping water from the Seine was the equivalent of tens of millions of dollars.) But just as Renaissance poetry, before the ruins of antiquity, could claim of itself that "Not marble, nor the gilded monuments / Of princes, can outlive this powerful rhyme," so the world of fable could arise anew in a dense, complex, magnificently high-spirited poetry. It was not frozen into unenduring stone (the labyrinth in Versailles was destroyed in 1775), to speak only with the plashing of falling water, which is always nonsense until poetry makes it mean something.

Wandering through La Fontaine's world of fable is not in the least like going through one of the Sun King's labyrinths. It is more like a walk through an English, or natural, sort of garden. The poet's muse, "*aux bords d'une onde pure*," propounds its profusion of stories, shades of ironic coloring, nuances of diction, turns of allegorizing strategy, and types of moral stance. But in all of these sorts of story, it is what happens to them when they are "*mises en vers*" by the great poet that unifies them. The very verse itself—the so-called "*vers libres*" of rapidly shifting line lengths and rhyming schemes (not to be confused with "*vers libre*," the unrhymed "free verse" of Rimbaud and modernity)—creates a tone that could be truly, but unsatisfactorily, characterized as "wry," "witty," "distanced."

Unsatisfactorily, because it does more than that. The zigzagging of the line lengths, and the unpredictability even of its patterns (the very famous poem of the country rat and city rat is so regular in its quatrains of unvaryingly alternating lines of eight and seven syllables, cross-rhymed *abab*, that it is still sung as a children's song to a repeated melody), have both general and local effects. So, too, the wonderfully flexible diction, with its pointed and elegantly self-conscious use of archaic words here and there, and its constant reminders that *this* world of fable is like nobody else's.

La Fontaine, the man who in daily life seems to have been devoted to truth-telling, avers that rhyming entails falsehood: "*Le mensonge et le vers de tout temps sont amis*," "Lying and verse have always been friends." Norman Spector gives this normal alexandrine as a bumpy dactylic pentameter: "Fiction and verse have always been friends through the age." Marianne Moore, in her celebrated, quirky version, has "Of make-believe and verse, twined indivisibly," demonstrating an apparently inevitable drift toward embroidery, which sometimes merely falsifies, as it does here, but in other instances, by other translators, can be rather like miming something in the original that remains silent in the translated language.

Perhaps this is the point at which to consider questions other than the matter of what is usually called "accuracy." Two English verse translations of La Fontaine's fables have recently appeared, one of them complete, the other containing a selection of 50. They afford an excellent occasion for considering once again the ongoing questions of what is lost, or possibly also found, in translation; of what verse translations can be for; and, of course, of the greatness of La

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Fontaine's particular achievement. Perhaps also because of the celebrated failure of Moore, one of our major poets, to get enough right in her versions of all the *Fables choisies mises en vers* (Richard Howard's handful of versions in unrhymed syllabics do better with tone), La Fontaine's remarkable achievement continues to present an untamed challenge to poetic translation.

The great early English printer William Caxton translated one of the many medieval collections of fables from the French and published it in 1483. The fable with which La Fontaine opens Book I of his great work appears in Caxton's early modern English (I have modernized the spelling and punctuation) thus:

> The XVII Fable is of the Ant and the Cigale [grasshopper]. It is good to purvey himself in the summer season of such things whereof he shall myster [need] and have need in winter season. As thou mayst see by this present fable of the cigale which in the winter time went and demanded of the ant some of her corn for to eat. And then the ant said to the cigale, "What hast thou done al the summer last passed?" And the cigale answered, "I have sung." And after said the ant to her, "Of my corn shalt thou none have. And if thou has sung all the summer, dance now in winter." And therefore there is one time for us to do some labor and work, and one time for to have rest. For he that worketh not nor doth no good shall have oft at his teeth great cold, and lack at his need.

It will be noticed that this little story has what the Greeks called a promythium and an epimythium, or what we would call the "moral" (the promythium being originally a sort of indexing device whose function changed into that of introductory moral). La Fontaine's story of *La Cigale et la Fourmi* is free of the explicit moralizing of either of these (although he uses both frequently in other fables). We need go no further than its famous opening lines to see the quintessence of his art at work:

> La cigale, ayant chanté
> Tout l'été
> Se trouva fort dépourvue
> Quand la bise fut venue:
> Pas un seul petit morceau
> De mouche ou de vermisseau . . .
>
> [The cicada having sung / all summer / found herself quite destitute / when the winter wind came: / not a single tiny bit / of fly or worm.]

The normal promise of neoclassical verse—to keep a metrical form going in a consistent pattern of line length and rhyming—is sharply violated here, and to pointed effect: the summer of singing occurs in a radically shortened line, itself prefiguring the cutting-off of plenty by winter soon to be mentioned. It is not surprising to find both Norman Shapiro and Norman Spector translating the opening the same way, for the strategy for responding to the effect seems inevitable:

> The cricket having sung her song
> All summer long
> Found—when the winter wind blew free—
> Her cupboard bare as bare could be;
> Nothing to greet her hungering eye:
> No merest crumb of worm or fly.
> [Shapiro]

> Cicada having sung her song
> All summer long,
> Found herself without a crumb
> When winter winds did come.
> Not a scrap was there to find
> Of fly or earthworm, any kind.
> [Spector]

The long/song rhyme is apparently inevitable for modern translators: James Michie, in his really fine versions of 82 of the fables (1979; no French texts, but a fine introduction by Geoffrey Grigson), gives, "The cicada, having chirped her song / All summer long"; and Francis Duke (1965; excellent introduction, fascinating notes and appendices) does it, "Locust, having sung her song / All summer long." Only Moore's "Until fall a grasshopper / Chose to chirr," idiosyncratic but not poetically original, departs from this, but her "chirr" makes a blur of the sharp effect of the "long" in the short line about the long summer.

In Spector's version of the succeeding lines, two other problems arise that, I am sorry to say, mar his translations throughout. All of the 20 lines of the poem following the short one are in the same seven-syllable line, but Spector varies "When winter winds did come" with six syllables and three beats. Substituting differing patterns of line length for La Fontaine's precise ones is often necessary, given the exigencies of English stress and syntax. Often the local effects of a short-short-long pattern in three lines of the French, for example, may be best handled by another pattern in the English. But in this case, where the consistency is itself the mode, it seems pointless. The worse problem, though, is that Spector gives us the awkward "did come," which always reads in modern rhymed verse like archaizing filler; and although it might be argued that he was trying to catch the tense and aspect of "*fut venue*," the effect is to weaken the movement of the line. This sort of thing happens continually in his English verse.

Shapiro never does this. There is always an assurance of metrical control, and a sharp aptness to his decisions about diction. When he makes an egregious emendation or substitution, it most often rings true. I prefer the some-

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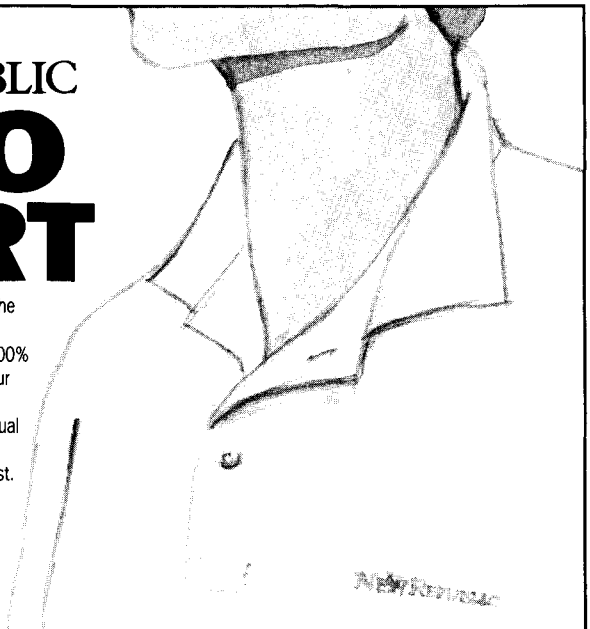

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what startling adjustments he makes to the old familiar fable of the fox and the crow (even with the almost outrageous allusion at the very end) to something chaster but less neatly done. The sense of play in, and with, the translation is an appropriate version of the poet's own:

Perched on a treetop, Master Crow
Was clutching in his bill a cheese,
When Master Fox, sniffing the fragrant breeze,
Came by and, more or less, addressed him so:
"Good day to you, Your Ravenhood!
How beautiful you are! How fine! How fair!
Ah! Truly, if your song could but compare
To all the rest, I'm sure you should
Be dubbed the *rara avis* of the wood!"
The crow, beside himself with joy and pride
Begins to caw. He opens wide
His gawking beak; lets go the cheese; it
Falls to the ground. The fox is there to seize it,
Saying: "You see? Be edified:
Flatterers thrive on fools' credulity.
The lesson's worth a cheese, don't you agree?"
The crow, shamefaced and flustered, swore—
Too late, however: "Nevermore!"

This may be the single most familiar fable to American readers. To play with it requires some bravura. "Your Ravenhood" for good old "*Monsieur le Corbeau*" and "*Rara avis*" for "*le phénix des hôtes de ces bois*" are a little surprising, but by the time second thoughts have let them pass, they have already worked. More interesting to me is the sequence ". . . His gawking beak; lets go the cheese; it / Falls to the ground. The fox is there to seize it," where the series of enjambed lines culminating in the half-stumbling "cheese; it" is followed across the line break by the falling of the cheese into another clause ending at the middle of a line. But the whole is elegantly saved, in a completed pentameter line, when the fox is there to seize not only the cheese, but, we feel momentarily, the fragment of verse: the fox catching the cheese catches the falling half-line, in a move that is pleased with itself even as it gives pleasure.

Again, in the wonderful short fable of the mountain laboring to give birth to the ridiculous mouse (in the proverb, "*et nascitur ridiculus mus*"), La Fontaine cannot resist moralizing it as a defense of his own retreat from epic inflation into the wisdom of shrewd smallness. The pregnant mountain, shouting and screaming so that spectators are convinced she's about to give birth to a city huger than Paris, produces a mouse—in La Fontaine, everyone

Crut qu'elle accoucherait sans faute
D'une cité plus grosse que Paris:
Elle accoucha d'une Souris.

Here the sublime rhyme of Paris/Souris, almost does it all. There's no way to get that in English; even house/mouse misses the epic grandeur of the drop in scale. Shapiro doesn't try, and simply gives us "That all who run to watch surmise / She'll bear a city more than Paris' size. / A mouse is what she bore." He may indeed be playing off the bilingual surmise/*souris*, and taking some solace from that. Spector's fails for me in many ways:

A Mountain straining in labor
Uttered such a piercing cry
That, rushing up, each neighbor
Thought she'd deliver, up to the sky,
A city greater than Paris therefore.
A Mouse is what she bore.

The delivering "up to the sky" is so strained that it commits only the fault of parodic self-exemplification, the rhetoric straining to produce "*ridiculus mus*."

Shapiro doesn't bemoan the loss of the Paris/mouse, and gets his (or, really, English's) own back at the end, when, after rendering beautifully the parody of the epic opening in La Fontaine, he catches better than any other translator the magnificent deflation at the end. La Fontaine avers that

Quand je songe à cette fable
Dont le récit est menteur
Et le sense et véritable,
Je me figure un auteur
Qui dit: "Je chanterai la guerre
Que firent les Titans au maître du tonnerre."
C'est promettre beucoup: mais qu'en sort-il souvent?
Du vent.

This final tiniest line, with its full rhyme, reminds us once again how the density of "hot air" (in its rhetorical sense) is in inverse proportion to its expansiveness, like bad pseudo-poetic rhetoric. Here Shapiro is immensely satisfying:

When I conceive this fiction
Empty of fact but full of sense,
It seems to me a true depiction
Of authors' vain grandiloquence.
They promise: "Ah, my lyre will sing
Of Titans' combat with the Thunder's king."
Fine words! And yet, what often comes to pass?
Just gas.

His additions all come from so deep a grasp of the matter that, at worst, they spell out and gloss the issues (such as the "vain grandiloquence" and the "my lyre will sing" as an English neoclassic cliché to parallel "*Je chanterai*").

Spector often translates an alexandrine in the French by some kind of accentual long line in the English as here:

. . . "I'll now sing of that war
That Titans waged, to the master of thunder's door."
That's promising a lot, but what often comes out of there?
Hot air.

Shapiro, as in his version of these lines, seems almost to feel viscerally the way in which the English pentameter always stands in for the alexandrine—it's the same "official," canonical line—and he uses it in this passage, as elsewhere, appropriately. But generally his ear for English iambic verse is so well-tuned that his lines have the sort of authority that gives credence to his strategies of adaptation and adumbration. His diction, also, seems remarkably flexible in exactly the right way. I would particularly commend the ending of "The Dog Who Drops His Prey for Its Reflection," and the serious high mode of the closing of the fable of "The Oak and the Reed," the

The Two Cities

What they are, those far lights, incomplete nimbus
resting on the dark peak
of one mountain in the crescent of mountains
encircling this city,
no one who lives here knows.
From the vantage of foothills,
the city is a vast table littered
with lights, amber, the color of raw sugar,
each coarse crystal somehow illuminated.

One nightly disappears into one lattice.

In the west, when the sun has set,
the moutains fade to one
black fabric. Other stars
too weak, the single constellation
appears ready for naming.
Perhaps *The Gull*, one deceived on white wings.
Or *The Circus*, each light the face
of a center-ring clown dressed in white satin,
made up in white paint,
suggesting a kind of glory,

and a half-halo burning as brightly here.

Gregg Hodges

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story of how it's better, when the heavy storm comes, to be able to bend so as not to have to break: a fable inevitably political.

La Fontaine tells of the uprooting of "*Celui de qui la tête au ciel étoit voisine / Et dont les pieds touchoient à l'empire des morts,*" which Shapiro catches up in the wind's uprooting "the one, who, just before, / Had risen heavenward with lofty head, / Whose feet had reached the empire of the dead." Spector's "The tree whose top thrust upward to heaven's domain, / And whose roots reached down toward the realm of the dead" is to be faulted not for its free-accentual looseness, but for the lack of point and effectiveness in its deployment, here as throughout.

In other instances, this causes Spector's version to lose the point of proverbial lines so famous in the French tradition that it's hard to know whether the poet has coined them, or is merely quoting them: for instance, the opening of the fable of the wolf and the lamb, which begins "*La raison du plu fort est toujours le meilleure; / Nous l'allons montrer tout à l'heure,*" which Spector gives as "The strong are always best at proving they're right. / Witness the case we're now going to cite." But Shapiro's "The strongest argue best, and always win. / Read on: you'll find the proof thereof herein," although it pads the second line a little and defers the "*tout à l'heure,*" makes up for it with the touch of wit in "thereof herein," and certainly gives the opening line its due. (If liberties are to be taken with it, I much prefer the artful chiasm of Elizur Wright, in 1841: "The strongest reasons always yield / To reasons of the strongest." Robert Thomson, on the other hand, an earlier English translator who takes unpardonable liberties that often totally deflect the moral point, represents the excesses of syntactic inversion in "Strength upon right with ease can trample, / As will appear by this example.")

The one advantage of Spector's version is its completeness, and with the accompanying French text it can be useful for reference (although it unfortunately lacks any annotations). It is indeed too bad that Shapiro did not give us some of the celebrated longer pieces, such as the moral essay addressed to Madame de la Sablière that concludes Book 9, or the wonderful *Les Compagnons d'Ulysse,* in which the poet, following Plutarch and other writers, works a splendid turn on Circe's magic. Ulysses' men, each transformed into a different sort of beast, all elect, with powerful pragmatic and satiric arguments, to remain animals rather than being returned to human form: "*Ils croyaient s'affranchir suivants leurs passions, / Ils étaient esclaves d'eux-mêmes.*" (Spector: "They thought indulging their passions had set them free; / Slaves of themselves, it would seem"; but even with its late-romantic syntactic inversion, Elizur Wright is tighter, and avoids the weak passing move of "it would seem" for the rhyme: "Where passion led, they thought their course was free; / Self-bound their chains they could not see." Here again, Spector has no ear for epigrammatic closure, and I long to hear what Shapiro would do with this.)

I also miss, in Shapiro's handsomely produced volume, the analogous bite and the deft turning of Grandville's celebrated illustrations, rather than the bland ones that are included. The jacket blurb suggests that they may have been chosen as being appropriate for children, for whom the way in which they merely depict literal animals, instead of allegories, will be even less helpful. But Shapiro's version reads aloud wonderfully, whether for children or adults, and works for readers with or without knowledge of the originals. The better you know them, the more pleasure his translations can give.

Among the fables Shapiro includes are two of the kind that would not be thought of by most readers as Aesopian. One, the fable of Discord, continues her story from Olympian surroundings to human life, by giving her a father named "Thine-and-Mine" and a brother named "True-False," and by having her end up in residence in the inn of marriage. The other is "*L'Amour et la Folie,*" an etiological fable of the blinding of Cupid. This was a favorite Renaissance motif, investigated over 50 years ago by Erwin Panofsky, which played on the fine ambiguity of the phrase "Love is blind": it could mean that Cupid, blindfolded, shoots his arrows randomly, and also that all lovers are blind to truths about their desires' objects and themselves as well. The translator's skill and wit come through beautifully. I can make no better recommendation of his work than to give the entire narrative part, starting with its inspired handling of the internal rhyme in the original's "*La Folie et l'Amour jouoient un jour ensemble*":

Folly and Love, one day at play together,
Had a dispute. The latter wondered whether
The Council of the Gods ought not be called
Folly, incensed, punched, flailed away
And robbed the other of the light of day;
Whose mother, Venus, properly appalled—
Shrieking for vengeance, woman that she was—
Deafened the gods and won them to her cause:
Nemesis, Jove, Hell's judges too—
In short, the whole Olympian crew.
"No punishment is hard enough," she pleaded;
"My son is now an invalid.
Do what you have to do!" The court acceded,
And so, indeed, do it they did:
In view of public weal and private woe,
They sentenced Folly evermore to go
Abroad with Love, withersoever,
And be his constant guide, forever.

JOHN HOLLANDER is the author most recently of *Harp Lake* (Knopf) and *Melodious Gile* (Yale University Press).

The Making of a Madman

BY JOHN JUDIS

Lyndon LaRouche and the New American Fascism by Dennis King

(Doubleday, 312 pp., $19.95)

America has had its aristocratic anti-Semites, like Henry Adams and Albert J. Nock, and its gutter ideologues, like William Dudley Pedley and George Lincoln Rockwell, but almost none of them has achieved the sheer notoriety of Lyndon LaRouche. An obscure Trotskyist and a leader of a minor New Left splinter group, LaRouche was transformed sometime in the early 1970s into a publicity-hungry, mob-tied, neo-Nazi crackpot with zealous followers around the globe, friends on the Reagan administration National Security Council, and federal matching funds for his Democratic presidential bids. Even last year, as LaRouche and his followers faced numerous federal indictments for credit card fraud, they played a critical but

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largely unacknowledged role in undermining Michael Dukakis's presidential prospects.

LaRouche has often been misconstrued by his opponents. Many type him as a "conservative Democrat," somewhere to the right of, say, Sam Nunn. When Daniel P. Moynihan attacked his LaRouche-allied opponent in the New York primary in 1982 for being anti-Semitic, he was criticized by CONDUCT, a citizens group composed of Rabbi Balfour Brickner, Bishop Paul Moore Jr., and other leading New York clergy, for injecting "issues of bigotry" into the campaign. Other critics have been intimidated by LaRouche's physical and legal threats, and by his willingness to say anything and to print anything to discredit an opponent.

As a result, the job of unmasking LaRouche has been left primarily to a small band of courageous free-lancers, led by Dennis King. King deserved a Pulitzer Prize for the investigative reports on LaRouche that he published in the Manhattan weekly *Our Town* and in THE NEW REPUBLIC. Now he has written an authoritative biography of LaRouche and his movement. It will probably not win any awards, either (it is fairly disorganized and difficult to read), but it will be the definitive work on its crazy, chilling subject. The book deserves to be bought not only for its plot, but also to reward its author for sticking it out in the face of constant harassment.

Lyndon LaRouche was born in 1922 in Rochester, New Hampshire. From King's researches, and from LaRouche's repeatedly revised autobiography, *The Power of Reason*, we know that LaRouche's father, a small-business man, was a creature of resentments, moved by ancient grudges. (With his usual lack of self-reflection, LaRouche says of himself, "My father and I always differed; grudges were not my predilection.") Lyndon Sr. quit the United Shoe Company when he was passed over for a promotion, and spent the next decades trying to do the company in, even testifying in a government case against it.

LaRouche's parents were fundamentalist Quakers who became deeply involved in the politics of the church. In 1937 LaRouche's father, writing under an assumed name, privately published a polemic against left-wing Quakers. He accused the American Friends Service Committee of being Bolsheviks, and criticized its members for attacking a country that was opposed to Bolshevism—King reasons that he referred to Nazi Germany or Fascist Italy. Lyndon Sr. also chastised a Rhode Island Friends group for not applauding an anti-Jewish speech by a Palestinian. His political positions, as well as his petit bourgeois anger, would eventually be echoed by his son, but not until Lyndon Jr. had undertaken a tortured journey through the sectarian left.

LaRouche, who as a Quaker pacifist rejected military service in World War II, fell under the spell of Marxism at a conscientious objector camp. After the war, he enrolled at Northeastern University to study physics, but dropped out to participate full time in politics. In 1948 he applied for membership in the Trotskyist Socialist Workers Party, and the next year, under the name "Lyn Marcus" (that is, "Lenin Marx"), he went to work in a factory on the party's behalf. In all, LaRouche spent 17 years in the SWP.

The SWP was a tiny sect bedeviled by the Communist Party on one side and an indifferent, or hostile, working class on the other. Its members were united by their opposition to capitalism and to Stalinist communism, and by their conviction, derived from the history of Lenin's Bolshevik Party, that what matters most in a revolutionary organization is not its size, but its understanding of historical forces. This conviction, combined with a measure of internal democracy, led to innumerable schisms over seemingly minor issues (like the class character of the Ceylonese government). It also later provided LaRouche with a ready rationalization for the size of his National Caucus of Labor Committees (NCLC). "If a small group not only accurately assesses the nature of this lawful course of [historical] developments," LaRouche wrote in 1979, "but is able to chart the merging course of events, that relatively small group can exert an unusual influence upon larger groups."

During LaRouche's years in the SWP, he read extensively in economics, history, and popular science. He also became a successful management consultant for May & Co., counseling corporations on methods of reducing their labor costs at the same time that he was trying to overthrow the capitalist system. LaRouche has always had an ability to conceptualize. His grasp of Marxist economics, for instance, was certainly as good as that of a bright left-wing graduate student; and he could hold his own in conversations with engineers about fusion or computer technology. In 1966, after he was expelled from the SWP for trying to organize a radical schism with British schismatic Gerald Healy, LaRouche began teaching Marxist economics at the Free School of New York, where he assembled a following of New Leftists, including the leaders of the Columbia University branch of the Maoist Progressive Labor Party. During the Columbia strike in 1968, LaRouche organized his own faction inside SDS: the SDS Labor Committee.

LaRouche's faction was distinguished by its theoretical seriousness and its rejection of Weatherman-style violence and Black Panther-induced guilt. In the fall of 1968 his group broke with the rest of SDS when it backed the teachers' union against black community groups in the Ocean Hill-Brownsville strike. Like other New Left groups of that period, the SDS Labor Committee had a fanatic edge, but it was expressed in its members' conviction that they had the most far-reaching and penetrating analysis of world capitalism. Many of the activists that LaRouche attracted would later become historians, economists, and computer programmers. They were among the more moderate, thoughtful members of the Days-of-Rage New Left.

But several years later LaRouche's organization, now christened the National Caucus of Labor Committees, was well on its well to becoming a neo-Nazi cult. By 1973 LaRouche was spurring his followers to assault and break up the meetings of Communists, Trotskyists, and Black Nationalists, in what he called "Operation Mop-up." King observes that LaRouche's tactics were explained in the ideological terms of the left, but were consciously modeled on the Nazis' physical assaults in the 1920s against rival factions.

At the same time LaRouche began to fear assassination. He also began to worry that his followers were being "brainwashed" by the CIA and British intelligence to betray him; his prime suspect was one Chris White, a British member of the NCLC. LaRouche began subjecting his followers to "ego stripping," a process of psychological abuse similar to that practiced by other cults. By 1975 he was beginning to meet with neo-Nazis and members of the Ku Klux Klan, to veer sharply from left to right, from being anti-capitalist to anti-Semitic.

Two kinds of things had probably happened to LaRouche. First, LaRouche was a person whose zeal and imagination flourished in the revivalist atmosphere of the '60s. His was an evangelical passion transmuted into the arcane language of Marxist politics. In the '60s this passion found an apparent basis in the teeming student left, but when the Marxist, Maoist, and Trotskyist parts of the left burned themselves out in the Nixon era, LaRouche, like other New Left leaders, was left without a raison d'être. While some leftists withdrew or temporarily stepped back, La-

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Rouche retained his passion. Without a reality to nourish that passion, however, it began to move in bizarre directions, like a missile that has lost its guidance system. In this respect, LaRouche's trajectory was similar to that of Haight-Ashbury rebel minister Jim Jones, who established a neo-fascist cult in Guyana after flower power wilted.

Second, LaRouche was widely believed to have undergone a personal crisis in the early '70s. In 1972 he turned 50, an age when his father was securely ensconced in his own business. LaRouche had been through one marriage and divorce, and the woman he had lived with for a decade, who had been his closest political collaborator, had left him for Chris White, a younger man. It was probably no coincidence that White became the first object of LaRouche's Manchurian Candidate fantasy. One former NCLC members told the *Boston Phoenix* in 1974, "I date the change [in LaRouche] for the worst when Carol Schnitzler, Lyn's mistress, left him the summer before last."

During this period LaRouche began to show signs not simply of quasi-religious eccentricity and fanaticism, but also of outright lunacy. His autobiography, which was published in 1979, reads like a case history of paranoid schizophrenia, with LaRouche ricocheting from fear of assassination to delusions of power and fantasies of genius. LaRouche warns of his assassination. "The most powerful adversary presently available to anyone in the 'Western world' has not only expressed his wish for my early demise, but has visibly deployed a coordinated force of slander and physical harassments, and has set into motion specialized capabilities of an assassination-relevant sort," he writes in *The Power of Reason*. But he reassures the reader that "if I survive the months immediately before me at this moment of writing, it will become reasonable—at a rapid rate—that I might be inaugurated president of the United States in January 1981." And LaRouche is rather in awe of his own genius. He is, he writes, "by a large margin of advantage the leading economist of the 20th century." He tells the reader that he understands "greatness." "I know what the realized pinnacles of human personal development are in our time and, to large measure, in earlier times. I have essentially matched them. Thus I can address a concerned parent, or a child, and inform them of the nature of greatness as it is experienced from the inside."

Like other madmen, LaRouche retained his analytical and practical powers. As King notes, LaRouche offered

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The "New" PLO

Or: Can the Leopard Change its Spots?

After more than 20 years of ostracism by most of the civilized world, Yasir Arafat, Chairman of the PLO, has finally uttered the "magic words" demanded by the U.S. It didn't come easy, and he didn't get it quite right. But it was good enough for Secretary of State George Schultz who, "the words" having been spoken, declared the willingness of the U.S. to talk with the PLO. One wonders whether that surprising opening will bring peace in the Middle East any closer to realization.

What are the facts?

■ Former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, having wrung major concessions from Israel, promised that the U.S. would not deal with the PLO unless it fulfilled two conditions: (1) it would accept U.N. Resolutions 242 and 238; (2) it would recognize Israel's "existence". Congress added a third condition, namely that the PLO would renounce terrorism. Finally, after 20 years of obdurate resistance, Yasir Arafat, as spokesman for the PLO, did make those statements. Secretary Schultz decided therefore that the U.S. must establish contact with the PLO. Only a week earlier, the Secretary had refused Arafat a visa to enter the United States, because of his personal association with and personal responsibility for widespread terrorism all over the world.

■ What are the goals of the PLO, and is it likely that they have changed by the uttering of those three sentences? The PLO is a terror organization, created in 1964 by the Arab League. It has only one aim: the destruction of the State of Israel through force and violence. Any apparent deviation from this single-minded aim is a temporary tactical maneuver.

■ The basic charter of the PLO is the so-called "Palestinian National Covenant." Its main theme is that the State of Israel has no right whatever to exist. It states clearly that "Palestine...is an indivisible part of the Arab homeland," and that "the Arab-Palestinian people...reject all solutions that substitute for the total liberation of Palestine." Those PLO and Arab leaders who have from time to time ventured to propose a less inflexible approach have invariably paid with their lives for such deviation from PLO "orthodoxy".

■ The recent unilateral declaration by the PLO of a "Palestinian State with its capital in Jerusalem" on territory administered by and under control of Israel is an attempted step in that direction. The PLO was founded long before Israeli administration of Judea-Samaria (the "West Bank") and the Gaza Strip. Its avowed purpose was then, has always been and continues to be, not the establishment of a Palestinian state, but the destruction of Israel proper.

■ The PLO is the kingpin of international terror. It maintains a complex network of relations with all of the main terror organizations throughout the world. It has written a blood-spattered record of unrelenting terror. Some of their more "glorious" exploits: the mid-air explosion of a Swissair jetliner (47 dead); the attack on pilgrims and passengers at Ben-Gurion International Airport (26 dead, 76 wounded); the attack on Israeli athletes at the Munich Olympics (11 dead); attack on the Ma'alot school (24 dead, 62 wounded—mostly children); the hi-jacking of a passenger bus on the Haifa-Tel Aviv highway (35 dead, 80 wounded); the coordinated shoot-outs at the Rome and Vienna Airports (16 dead); and the murderous attack on the Istanbul Synagogue, in which 21 worshippers were killed.

■ In their attacks against Americans, the PLO hand is suspected in many of the kidnappings of U.S. hostages. American citizen Leon Klinghoffer was brutally killed in the PLO ship-jacking of the *Achille Lauro*. Some of the most brutal PLO attacks against Americans have been against U.S. diplomats. In the Sudan, in 1973, two American diplomats, Ambassador Cleo Noel and Chargé d'Affaires George C. Moore, were mercilessly machine gunned to death when blackmail demands were not met. *The Washington Post* reported on reliable evidence that Yasir Arafat personally was in charge of these executions. In 1976, Ambassador Francis Meloy, Jr. and Counselor Robert Waring were assassinated in Beirut, an attack widely believed to have been the work of the PFLP, a faction of the PLO. In March of 1988, a bomb-laden car was placed in front of the Hilton Hotel in Jerusalem in an attempt to assassinate Secretary George Shultz. There have been many bombings, hi-jackings, and terrorist attacks in virtually every Mid-East and European country, leaving countless dead and wounded. While the final verdict is not yet in, it is generally assumed by our government and by those who are investigating this terrible crime that one of the Palestinian factions patterned after and instructed by the PLO is responsible for the bombing of Pan Am flight #103, which cost over 270 mostly American lives.

Can the leopard change its spots? It does not seem likely. And it does not seem likely that the PLO, engaged in unrelenting terror since its creation 24 years ago, could suddenly become a factor for peace, just because of the intonation of a few "magic phrases". It is comforting to think that peace in the Middle East can be achieved by bestowing respectability on the PLO. But the only way to bring about peace in the Middle East is by direct negotiations between Israel and representatives of the residents of the administered territories, as agreed in the Camp David Accord: a period of autonomy, after which the final disposition and status of the territories will be decided by the people involved. The PLO cannot be a party to the peace process, because its charter calls for war and destruction and because terror and peace cannot exist together.

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prescient analyses of the Third World debt crisis (though it was an analysis that one could find regularly in Paul Sweezy's *Monthly Review* and other Marxist journals) and the potential of fusion energy. He ran a multimillion-dollar worldwide organization that with its strong-arm tactics, shady financial deals, and mob connections increasingly resembled a criminal racket. But at the same time his overall politics became clouded with the mythology and sheer nuttiness of the American and European far right.

When LaRouche turned right in the mid-'70s, he did not move toward conservatism. He went directly to European fascism and Nazism, which he blended with American populism and technocracy. LaRouche abandoned Marx's theory of history for that of the *Protocols of Zion* and of proto-Nazi theoreticians Alfred Rosenberg and Houston Stewart Chamberlain. At its heart was a stark vision of good and evil: LaRouche and his followers were "golden souls" or supermen, and the Jews, with their British allies, the evil "oligarchy" that must be destroyed. In the confines of the NCLC office, the LaRouchians joked about incinerating Jews. ("How many Jews can you fit into a Volkswagen?" NCLC members would ask. "One hundred. Four on the seats and ninety-six in the ashtray.")

In the world after Hitler, however, anti-Semitism must be, for tactical reasons, a little disguised. Sometimes LaRouche resorted to a kind of moral inversion. Jews became Nazis. "America must be cleansed for its righteous war [against the Soviet Union] by the immediate elimination of the Nazi Jewish lobby . . . from the councils of government, industry, and labor." Henry Kissinger is "far worse than Hitler." At other times LaRouche resorted to allegory and to allusion. Both European and American anti-Semites had historically identified the Jews through the Rothschilds with the British. In LaRouche's anti-Semitic iconography, the queen of England came to symbolize the Jewish oligarchy. In LaRouche's *New Solidarity*, the drug trade was depicted as a Star of David with the queen of England at the top, flanked by Henry Kissinger and Milton Friedman.

Like many American populists, LaRouche blamed Wall Street for America's economic ills. He also fell back on the same kind of monetary conspiracy theories that had clouded the minds of Coin Harvey and other populist rabble-rousers. But anti-Semitism was merely an offshoot of American populism. In LaRouche's case, it is integral to his outlook.

LaRouche's politics were religious in temper, but not in values. LaRouche placed himself and his followers above morality and religion. They invented anything they pleased about political opponents: Kissinger, for instance, was a member of the "Homintern," a secret homosexual brotherhood operating "at the highest levels of government." They regularly impersonated reporters from established newspapers and magazines to gain interviews that they then used to discredit LaRouche opponents. They railed against drugs while allying themselves with Mafia and Teamster drug lords and with Manuel Noreiga, whom LaRouche praised as Latin America's foremost fighter against drugs. They raised millions of dollars a year by taking out loans over the phone, which they had no intention of repaying, and by doctoring credit card receipts.

LaRouche's political views would ordinarily have consigned him to a park bench in Union Square, but through a combination of guile, deceit, and fanatic intelligence, he was able to achieve surprising prominence and even influence. LaRouche never had more than a thousand followers worldwide, but they made up in zeal (they worked 16-hour days, for cult wages) what they lacked in numbers. Around-the-clock fund-raising in airports and over the telephone, credit card fraud, and successful printing and computer software businesses netted LaRouche as much as $30 million a year, which he used to fund campaigns, conferences, and publications. Running for president, LaRouche raised enough money in 1980 and 1984 to qualify for federal matching funds.

LaRouche's NCLC enjoyed certain kinds of success by picking up early on issues that were being ignored or dismissed by the scientific and political mainstream. LaRouche's Fusion Energy Foundation established links to the Department of Energy's Office of Fusion Energy; government officials spoke at its conferences. The NCLC began promoting space weaponry in the late '70s, and it became a part of the right-wing coalition that convinced Reagan to adopt his Star Wars program in 1983.

LaRouche set up an international intelligence network and published a glossy weekly, the *Executive Intelligence Review*. As King and Ronald Radosh reported in THE NEW REPUBLIC in November 1984, LaRouche and his operatives briefed Reagan administration officials from the CIA and National Security Council. Thanks to sheer tenacity and a willingness to break the rules of journalism, LaRouche's private intelligence army was often able to find genuine scoops. In the spring of 1986, for example, six months before a Lebanese daily broke the story, the *Executive Intelligence Review* published the details of secret American arms sales to Iran.

As a presidential candidate, LaRouche attracted few votes, but he was able to exploit the media's hunger for the odd and sensational to garner considerable publicity. He created a front organization, the National Democratic Policy Committee, that recruited candidates, many of whom knew little about LaRouche, and who ran on vaguely populist and anti-drug, anti-AIDS platforms. According to King, these candidates got over 20 percent of the vote in at least 70 statewide or congressional races between 1982 and 1988. In March 1986 two NDPC candidates in Illinois won the Democratic nomination for lieutenant governor and secretary of state, forcing gubernatorial candidate Adlai Stevenson to run on a third party ticket.

LaRouche and his operatives even played a minor role in the 1988 presidential election. At the Democratic convention last July, LaRouche followers began circulating leaflets asking, "Is Dukakis the new Senator Eagleton?" According to King, they called newspapers around the country warning them that their competitors were about to break the story about Dukakis's mental illness. Numerous newspapers, notably the *Washington Times*, took the bait, and printed front-page stories about the rumor. Then, at President Reagan's press conference on August 3, a reporter from the *Executive Intelligence Review* asked the president whether he thought Dukakis should make his medical records public. "Look, I'm not going to pick on an invalid," Reagan replied.

But LaRouche's outlaw mentality finally proved his undoing. In October 1986 federal agents seized LaRouche's financial records at his Leesburg estate, and a series of fraud indictments began against LaRouche and his key staff. Last January LaRouche and six of his followers were convicted and sentenced to prison, LaRouche for five to 15 years for fraud and tax evasion. His followers bought roadside billboards demanding that Bush pardon the political prisoner ("C. Boyden Gray knows LaRouche is innocent," the billboards suggestively declare). LaRouche's wife claimed that he was a victim of "Satanism," but Assistant U.S. Attorney Kent Robinson insisted that LaRouche's was "not a political case. This was a case of theft."

King believes that LaRouche is not simply a madman whose success rested on his willingness to break the rules, but a political genius who could have de-

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stroyed the country. "LaRouche was a man with a coherent program, subtle tactics and—what is usually lacking in American politics—a long-range plan of how to get from here to there. Both in word and in deed, he was a serious ideologue in the classic European fascist mold." King also hints that LaRouche's movement, like Hitler's in the 1920s, might weather a prison term. "The LaRouchians are an ideological movement with an intense collective spirit," King writes. "Such movements often function most vigorously under attack, even when their top leaders are in jail or exile."

But King, who has spent a decade tracking LaRouche, overrates him. LaRouche's long-range plan always rested on a crazed view of himself as above the law. Like Jim Jones, or like the New Left émigré Bob Avakian, he has made a theory of history out of his own marginality. In his trial, LaRouche tried pathetically to parlay a few connections with government officials and CIA gunrunners into a national security defense, claiming that he was acting under CIA orders. (If anything, LaRouche may have worked during the '70s for the CIA's adversaries. King recounts how LaRouche followers met with KGB agents and attended Moscow conferences, and undertook various suspect missions, like coming to the defense of two Soviet spies arrested in New Jersey in 1977.)

King suggests that, in warning of conspiracies by Kissinger and the queen of England, LaRouche was not uttering mindless nonsense, but following a strategy of "fantastic lying" that he learned from a study of Stalin. But one must still wonder what beliefs the lying was supposed to conceal. Does it make LaRouche any less nutty that he believed that AIDS, drugs, and depression were promoted by an international conspiracy of Jewish bankers, rather than by the queen of England?

King also overrates LaRouche's political success. Many of the candidates that LaRouche's National Democratic Policy Committee recruited to run for office were drawn by his populist rhetoric or his get-tough message on drugs or AIDS. In 1984, for instance, the *Houston Post* found that 14 of 25 NDPC candidates in Harris County were unclear or had doubts about what the NDPC and LaRouche stood for. When voters realized who they were voting for, moreover, they looked elsewhere. In the Illinois general election in 1986, LaRouche's candidates received the lowest percentage that any statewide Democratic candidate ever received.

Unlike the European fascists, LaRouche was forced constantly to camouflage his own message. Like the American Communists of the late '30s (or the Unification Church today), he practiced a popular front politics, campaigning against AIDS and drugs while warning the cognoscenti about the dangers of the "Old Testament parasites" or "Israeli dopers." It was thus possible for a group like CONDUCT in New York not to know that LaRouche and his followers were neo-Nazis.

At times LaRouche developed a mass following for certain ideas—for instance, for his California AIDS quarantine plan—but not for himself or for the NCLC's overall ideology. LaRouche's personal success rested largely on his own reckless disregard for the rules of politics, journalism, and morality. It also rested on the vulnerability of the modern media-dominated political system, which allows candidates with virtually no followers but with a hunger for publicity to command political attention. Through it all, however, LaRouche never achieved popularity, only celebrity. He didn't establish a political base, only a minor racket.

If there is to be a "new American fascism," it will probably not come from a crackpot like LaRouche. It will come from practicing politicians who are willing to court the voters' darker impulses. In the United States, it is likely that racism rather than anti-Semitism will be the underlying appeal. This is not to deny the existence of anti-Semitism, but rather to recognize, in Richard Hofstader's words, that populist anti-Semitism has functioned in America as "a rhetorical style, not a tactic or program." Race, by contrast, has been a pivot of American politics for the last 150 years on which the fortunes of the right and left have shifted. Segregationist George Wallace was a far more dangerous figure than George Lincoln Rockwell. David Duke and what he represents now deserve far closer scrutiny than LaRouche. King's book, it is to be hoped, will be LaRouche's epitaph. LaRouche is now 66, and he will not be eligible for parole until he is 71.

JOHN JUDIS is senior editor of *In These Times* and author of *William F. Buckley, Jr.: Patron Saint of the Conservatives* (Simon and Schuster).

Hyping the Hordes

BY EDWARD N. LUTTWAK

History of the Goths by Herwig Wolfram translated by Thomas J. Dunlap

(University of California Press, 613 pp., $39.95)

The Goths have been fortunate in their public relations. The Vandals rapidly graduated from despoilers of the Roman Empire to its earnest protectors (the Vandal Stilicho was arguably the last great West-Roman statesman), and the Huns did little damage in the West before they served most loyally in the armies of the East (they were a corps d'elite for Belisarius in the sixth century). The far more numerous Goths, by contrast, were the most destructive invaders of late antiquity. Their hordes successively ruined the Danubian provinces and both the Greek and Italic lands of the Empire, before engulfing southern Gaul and Spain, where they long remained. Yet it is not of Gothism that we speak when a telephone booth is wrecked. Nor do we say that so-and-so is somewhere to the right of Alaric the Goth, even though Attila was merely a suave extortionist, and it was Alaric who sacked Rome in August 410, causing Jerome in his hermit's cave at Bethlehem to mourn that the light had gone out from the world.

The great p.r. man whose artful wordings prevailed over nasty facts, who successfully constructed a positive image for the Goths, was one Flavius Magnus Aurelius Cassiodorus (b. 487), a latifundist, a leading Roman collaborator with the murderous Gothic regime of Italy, and founder of the monastery of Vivarium. Because Vivarium was explicitly dedicated to the preservation of Classical literature as well as to Christian piety—and thus became a vital link in the transmission of texts to our own days—Cassiodorus acquired an aura of scholarly sanctity that lingers still, certainly a great asset for a publicist. Cassiodorus's history of the Goths is now lost, but by way of a later crib (the *Getica* of Jordanes) it is still

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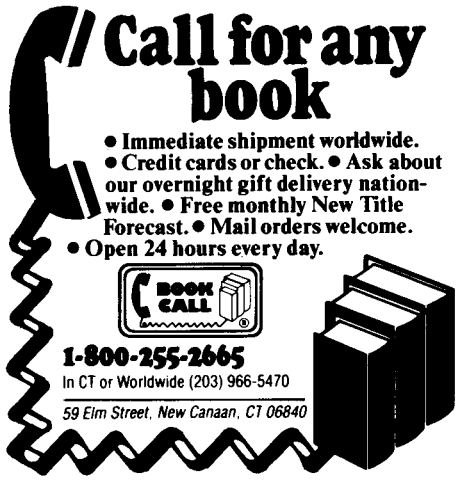
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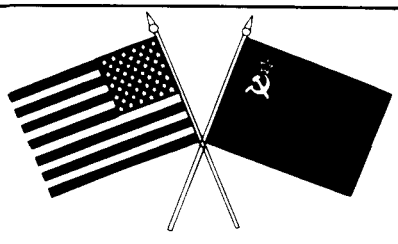

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the major source of much of what we think we know about the Goths up to his time.

One of Cassiodorus's embellishments was to provide a suitably noble origin for his master Theodoric, who became Italy's ruler from 493, after his murder of Odovacar/Odoacer, deposer of the last West-Roman emperor. Cassiodorus wrote of Theodoric's Amal clan as if it were a great patrician family of Rome, reconstructing his descent, the feats of his ancestors, and so on. Another of his many shrewd "spins" was to exaggerate the conversion of some Goths to Christianity (the first Gothic bishop, Ulfilas, was consecrated in 341) into a universal conversion, which was further misrepresented as a commitment to the preservation of *Romanitas*.

In fact, that non-event was followed by the most destructive of the Gothic invasions. The first eruption had occurred in the mid-third century, when boat parties looted Greek cities in a great arc from the Black Sea coast to Greece proper and down to Crete and Cyprus, while a land horde invaded the adjacent Balkans, defeating in 251 A.D. the field army of Emperor Decius, killed at Abrittus, in present-day Dobruja. Still, it was as supposed Christians that the Goths achieved their more lasting penetration in the later fourth century, which began with the pillage of Thrace and much of Thessaly after their destruction of the field army of Emperor Valens at Adrianople, on August 9, 378. (That day became one of the stock dates of old-fashioned historiography for that greatest of non-events, "the end of the Roman Empire." Such a periodization overlooks not merely the survival of the West-Roman power for another century, but also the continuity of East-Roman rule for another millennium).

A minor embellishment of Cassiodorus is typical p.r. word-smithing. Because the Goths were divided, by 300, into the quite separate Greutungi and Tervingi, names as horrid to classical ears as to our own, Cassiodorus preferred the boast-names "Ostrogothi" (rising-sun Goths) for the former and "Vesi" (glorious) for the latter; and then simply invented "Visigothi" from that, as a more elegant and symmetrical name. Theodoric's Greutungian conquest of Italy thus became the Ostrogothic kingdom of our history books, and Alaric's Tervingian followers, the Visigoths—something like Eurogoths, to anticipate a modern usage. When a Spanish tourist guide shows you post-Roman but pre-Islamic ruins in Toledo and calls them Visigothic, he is still paying tribute to the success of Cassiodorus's mystifications.

The more usual habit of contemporary Roman magnates and savants, historians included, was the exact opposite, of course. All the invading tribes were endowed with a hostile composite ethnography: they eat raw meat, bloodlust is their only passion, and so on. Even the most loyal Germanics serving the Empire were constantly under suspicion (Stilicho was falsely accused of treason and executed; his Eastern counterpart Gainas was murdered with all his Gothic retainers); and the denial of humanity to the invaders extended to the suppression of their ethnic nomenclature.

Thus it was that the Goths—migrants from southern Sweden along with the Gepids—were conflated with other Germanics, Vandals, Rugians, Sciri, and Burgundians, as well as with the Alans of Iranic origin as mythic "Scythians." That appellation, along with "Massagetae" for the Huns and much irrelevant nonsense about Amazons, was derived from Herodotus, whose anachronistic *Histories*, of certified literary status and pleasing style, were preferred to the contemporary evidence that was abundantly available, but not properly enshrined in ancient texts.

Writing in the most secure days of the second century Antonine empire, Tacitus could deploy an up-to-date ethnography in his *Germania*, wherein noble-savage Germans served as freedom-loving foils for his savage criticism of contemporary Roman society. Once disaffection—mostly Christian, but also the disaffection of the intellectuals—had duly weakened the Empire, the writers were finally willing to defend it, reserving their verbal hostility for the barbarian enemy. Hence catalogs of horror with large admixtures of Herodotian fantasy fill the pages of late antiquity. They are in blatant contradiction to the p.r. copy of Cassiodorus via Jordanes, and of other hired hands like Claudianus, the panegyrist of Stilicho.

The unsatisfactory state of the evidence did not much trouble subsequent historians from the Renaissance to Gibbon. It was the Empire and its doings that they wanted to reconstruct, not the cultures and the origins of the invaders. But when German scholars became prominent in classical historiography in the early 19th century, a revisionist perspective became common ("migration" replaced "invasion," for example). The Germanic tribes were increasingly depicted as the would-be saviors of the Empire, eager to enter within its borders to be sure, but also ready to defend its civilization. Hence much was made of Theodoric the Great (Cassiodorus's master)

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and of other Germanic rulers who did make demonstrable attempts to preserve *Romanitas*, by replacing looting with regulated settlements, by maintaining Roman legislation (for Romans, with a separate *lex Gothorum*), by seeking formal recognition from the emperor in the East.

With Darwinism in full flood, the more vehement neo-Goths of the late 19th century were not content with this conservationist depiction. Instead they offered the usual equation between morality and inevitability, with Germanic racial vigor contrasted to an alleged Late-Roman decadence. That paved the way for the outright glorification of the Goths in Wilhelmine Germany, where schoolboys were exhorted to follow the dubiously heroic example of Arminius of the Cherusci, the disloyal Roman auxiliary who treacherously lured the legions of Varus to their doom. And from there it was a very short step to the Nazi celebration of the ancient Germans, supposedly characterized by a pure warrior spirit, uncorrupted by the Judaic spirit of Christianity. (Wagner notwithstanding, the gold-mania of the Germanic looters was easily overlooked, though the sources convincingly show them starving in devastated provinces even as they were loaded down with gold.)

Made into proto-Nazis on one side, the Goths benefitted equally from Marxist revisionism. In its historiography, the barbarian invaders became land-hungry immigrants, Roman armies became the instruments of a millionaire senatorial class, and looting was a fully justified redistribution of wealth, with the Goths in particular most admirable as helpers of the heroic Bagaudae, the rural proletariat in revolt of late-antique Gaul. (The Huns, who were pastoralists and clearly more powerful, man for man, than the agricultural Goths or slave-owning Romans, caused endless problems for orthodox Marxist historians; E. A. Thompson, the author of far better works on the Goths, was reduced to absurd expedients in his Stalinist *History of Attila and the Huns* of 1948, pretending that Attila was not powerful after all, nor indeed important in any way, in spite of the spectacular resonance of his name in every surviving text.)

It is into this historiographical swamp that Herwig Wolfram has ventured to write his *History of the Goths*. This well-translated book is useful, especially for those who already know their Roman history, because Wolfram's resistance to the pro-imperial tendency of most of his sources has induced him to write of the Goths exclusively, ignoring the often predominant Roman aspect. But it is against the confused historiographical background that the extravagant praise of Wolfram's colleagues duly displayed on the dust jacket is best understood. *History of the Goths* is not "highly original" and it is not "brilliant." Wolfram has competently reconstructed the often fragmentary evidence in a manner that maintains an intelligent equilibrium between ancient and modern mystifications. In the circumstances, that is not a prosaic achievement.

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CORRESPONDENCE *continued from page 6*

the privilege of creating the specific form of someone else's consciousness of the world, is a term that now designates the products of that process rather than the process itself. So contrary to what Bennet says, information as a commodity doesn't differ that much from "shoes and green peas." If "the widest possible dissemination of information from diverse and antagonistic sources" won't enhance the value of the corporate giants, it won't occur.

DAVID PETERSON
Evergreen Park, Illinois

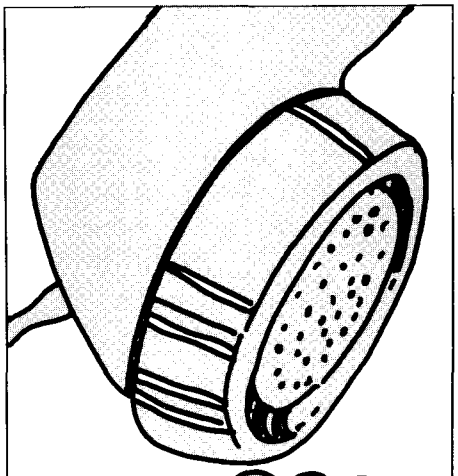
Towering Precedent

To the editors:

In "Tower Play" (March 27) TRB denounced John Tower's defeat as hypocritical puritanism. Why should Tower's private life have anything to do with his fitness for the job? After all, "experienced drinkers know how to sober up when they need to." Captain Hazelwood of the Exxon Valdez, from all accounts a very experienced drinker, found himself needing to do precisely that (TRB, "That's Oil, Folks," April 24). Having run his ship aground, he attempted to free it and failed. Exxon's refusal to heed warnings such as Hazelwood's drunk-driving record has resulted in the destruction of an ecosystem. Yet Hazelwood's responsibilities were far less momentous than those of a secretary of defense.

History is not a laboratory science, but as nearly as any political opinion can ever be tested and proven, may we now consider Tower's opponents vindicated? And if the Senate set standards of behavior for Tower that most senators would have trouble meeting themselves—well, perhaps in our heedless pursuit of short-term advantages we have made this world such a dangerous place that we must now demand nothing short of infallibility from those to whom we entrust its stewardship.

SUSAN WOOD
Pontiac, Michigan



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WASHINGTON DIARIST

Suburban Flight

A FEW WEEKS AGO, MY WIFE AND kids and I moved from the suburbs to the city: from bucolic Chevy Chase to the mean streets of Capitol Hill. Actually, they're not very mean at all. I never found the suburbs very comfortable; the neighbors kept an odd distance, as though they were sizing you up for years. A friend who recently made the normal migration—city to suburb—said his new neighbors are always saying, "Oh, Bill, have we had you and your wife over for a drink yet?" They know they were supposed to, but they really can't remember. In his new memoir, *Self-Consciousness*, John Updike describes a suburbia I never knew, but would like to have known: "My wife and I found ourselves in a kind of 'swim' of equally young married couples, an hour north of Boston and dependent upon each other for entertainment. There was a surge of belonging. . . . As a group, we had lovely times being young adults in Ipswich, while raising our children more or less absent-mindedly and holding down our jobs in much the same style." This last sentence describes an existence utterly alien to most of my Washington friends (and me, alas): working and raising children *absent-mindedly*. Incredible! Où sont les banlieues d'antan?

ANYWAY, FOR MUCH MORE MUNdane reasons (the commute was a killer), we've moved downtown. You have to lock your doors and scoop up your dog's steamy droppings with a baggie, but otherwise it's terrific. Capitol Hill has entered the age of post-gentrification; there's a lack of self-consciousness about its urban-ness and quaintness. And the variety of the place—rich people, middle-class people, and poor people thrown together—somehow breeds less envy than suburbia. In Chevy Chase, where everyone makes roughly the same salary, the neighbors were always wondering, "How could *they* afford that Acura?" The most shocking event in our ten years there came when a family that lived in a fairly small house on a fairly unfashionable street one day bought the biggest house on one of the most fashionable streets. No one could explain it.

THE OTHER DAY, AN OLD FRIEND named Jim Morgan stopped by the office. I hadn't seen him in a couple of years. Morgan is an old college classmate and a commodities broker in New York who was in Washington to visit his sister, who is in jail. Elizabeth Morgan, an author and surgeon who went to Yale, Oxford, and Harvard, would be graduating from Georgetown University Law Center in a few weeks if incarceration hadn't interrupted her education. She was sent to jail in August 1987 for contempt of court after she refused to produce her daughter, Hilary, who is now six, for a two-week unsupervised visitation by Hilary's father. Elizabeth wouldn't give Hilary up because she has reason to believe that her ex-husband sexually abused the child. Hilary is now in hiding, and Elizabeth is in jail. Real jail, not a country club for embezzlers and stock market cheats. She shares a cell six feet by 11 feet (pace it off to get an idea what it's like) with another prisoner. "There is rock music 16 hours a day," she says. "It is a depressing, confining, zoolike existence." Elizabeth is up against a D.C. judge named Herbert Dixon Jr., who seems to have no intention of letting her go. "The coercion has just begun," he said last December. If there is a good definition of habeas corpus, this is it. Jim tells me that Elizabeth has been in jail longer on a contempt charge than anyone in American history, with the exception of a few tongue-tied gangsters. Last year, when the story began to trickle out in the press, the reaction of some people who read about Elizabeth was: "Is she crazy or something?" But she's not. She simply won't compromise, and she's right not to. What makes this story so unfathomable to all of us in solipsistic, fin-de-siècle America is the principled stubbornness of it all. It doesn't make sense. But to Elizabeth, a very smart, engaging woman whom I last saw laughing around the smoked turkey at my 40th birthday party two years ago, it's very simple: her child would be in desperate trouble if her ex-husband could visit her alone, so she won't give the child up. Her own freedom is an afterthought. Hilary is safe; there's no doubt about that. And Elizabeth is willing to spend the next 12 years in jail—until her daughter reaches her majority and her father won't have any legal claim to visit her.

IT'S DOUBTFUL THAT OLIVER North will spend as many months in prison as Elizabeth Morgan already has—and even if he does, he'll probably go somewhere with tennis courts. North, unlike Elizabeth, showed no principle at all at his trial. That was the odd thing. He pointed the finger at higher-ups. I had always thought of North as a Gordon Liddy/jump-on-that-hand-grenade type. I asked an ex-CIA friend about the phenomenon, and he had an interesting explanation—a guess, but a plausible one: Brendan Sullivan had painted a nasty picture of prison for client Ollie and told him that the only way to get off was to pull a Nuremberg. So Ollie, follower of Bill Casey's orders (or Ronald Reagan's, or John Poindexter's, or whoever's), followed Sullivan's. A good Marine, willing to drag a president or two down with him.

AS A NEW RESIDENT OF WASHINGton, I'd like to urge the Rev. Jesse Jackson to run for mayor. First, it would be fun to see whether he's really an administrator, whether he can get the trash trucks to run on time. Second, congressional Democrats, grateful not to have him in the 1992 presidential primaries, would shovel money at the city (an activity that I now heartily endorse). Third, it would be easier to tell him to shut up about foreign policy and get back to work. Fourth, he acts as though he, like Bill Bennett, actually understands that the problems of drugs and crime and the disintegration of families are essentially cultural. Fifth, I have the suspicion he would make a terrific mayor. The guy should run. If he doesn't, it will mean he's a coward and a temporizer.

I WORK ON CAPITOL HILL (HENCE the Move, *supra*), and the big deal these days is something that's called "ethics" but is really not. It's really a dreary debate about conflicts of interest, which are (if you haven't noticed) impossible to avoid in life. There is an endless stream of committees and task forces looking into questions of ethics on the Hill, and former Democratic Representative Otis Pike of New York testified before one of them recently. Otis Pike, a major league curmudgeon, has made many stupid remarks in his time, but many smart ones, too. He told the members of Congress on the task force: "Your rules are not bad because they are political rules, politically enforced, or because they are incomprehensible or because you are so preoccupied with them that you can't get around to doing your jobs. It is worse than that. All over America thousands of good and honorable people look at the environment you have created here and decide they would never be interested in entering that environment. They take pride in their own morals and ethics. They value their privacy. They do not undress in public." The big problem with Congress—and government in general—is that a lot of the best people don't want anything to do with it. That isn't likely to bother Ronald Reagan, who would probably consider this sad result his greatest achievement.

JAMES K. GLASSMAN

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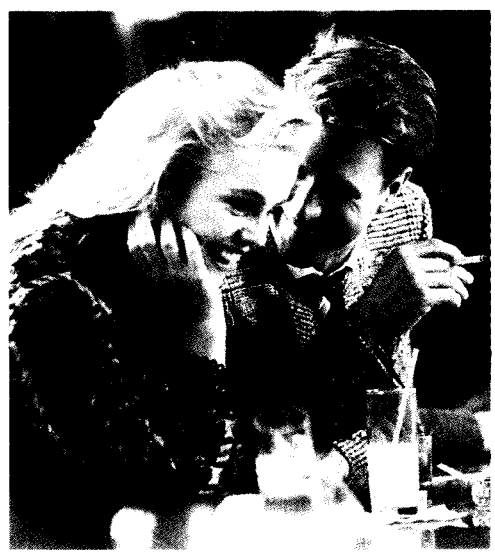

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